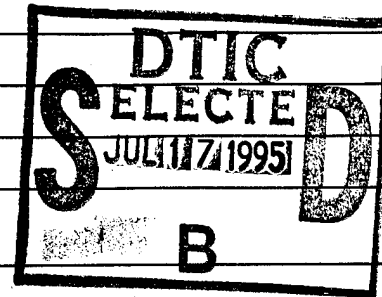


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"MAKING THE BEST USE OF YOUR JOINT FORCES":  
JOINT AND COMBINED OPERATIONS ON THE HUDSON RIVER,  
1777 and 1781

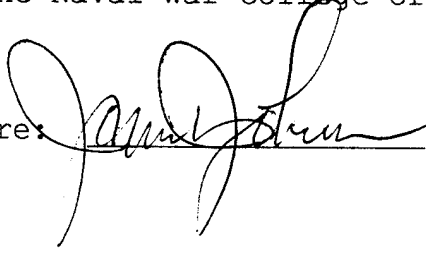
by

James M. Johnson

Colonel, U.S. Army

A paper submitted to the Director Advanced Research Department as an Advanced Research Project in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Naval War College for the degree of Master of Arts in National Security and Strategic Studies.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature: 

16 June 1995

Paper directed by  
Steven Ross  
Professor, Department of Strategy and Policy

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

British, French, and American commanders in the American Revolution understood the concepts of allied, joint, and amphibious operations. These operations fit within a defensive strategy that General George Washington and Lieutenant General Sir Henry Clinton practiced for most of the war: a war of posts with New York City and the "line of the Hudson" as the "seat of the war."

Through their experiences in the wars of the mid-eighteenth century the British developed sophisticated doctrine and practices for joint, amphibious operations. Because of this joint doctrine, Clinton and Commodore William Hotham were able to conduct a series of classic, amphibious landings to capture the fortifications of the Hudson Highlands in October 1777 and even burn the New York capital at Kingston. After a disastrous joint campaign in 1777, with French support and guidance, Washington and Lieutenant General Rochambeau threatened New York City with a joint expedition in the summer of 1781. While the Allied, joint forces failed to capture New York City, they later trapped the army of Lieutenant General Charles, Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown in the last significant campaign of the war. "One mind"--jointness--finally prevailed for the Americans as it had for Clinton and Hotham earlier.

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## PREFACE

Since I first arrived at West Point as an instructor in 1977, I have been interested in the role of the Hudson River and West Point in the American Revolution. This Advanced Research Project has given me the opportunity to explore the strategic dimension of these important places in our heritage. I also have been committed to the issue of jointness since I served in the Joint Assessment and Initiatives Office in the Pentagon in 1985. I have, therefore, focused this paper on issues of strategy and joint and combined operations in the eighteenth century that I think will add perspective to these same issues today and in the future. As a military historian, I am committed to the idea that insights can come from any period in history. I hope that the insights that I am presenting in this study will be particularly useful to serving officers as they confront "jointness" in their careers.

I want to thank Professor John Hattendorf and Commander William Burns of the Advanced Research Department for their support of my research and writing. Mr. Alan Aimone, curator of the Special Collections, United States Military Academy Library, West Point, New York, provided me a place to work and shared with me his vast knowledge on the American Revolution and New York. Dr. Michael Crawford and Mr. E. Gordon Bowen-

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Hassell helped me tremendously as I tried to sort out the naval operations in 1777 and allowed me to use the page proofs of critical documents from the upcoming tenth volume of Naval Documents of the American Revolution. Mr. Robert S. Cox of the William L. Clements Library provided key microfilm, maps, and documents. Maps were based on the originals done by Mr. Edward Krasnoborski, cartographer, Department of History, United States Military Academy. I want to thank each of these individuals for their kind assistance.

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## INTRODUCTION

"You will follow such orders as may be given you by his Excellency the General, or the Commanding officer appointed to direct the operations in that quarter."<sup>1</sup>

The Continental Marine Committee to Captains John Hodge and Thomas Grennell, 26 June 1777

"You will take measures for opening a communication with Count de Grasse the moment he arrives, and will concert measures with him making the best uses of your joint forces untill [sic] you receive aid from this quarter."<sup>2</sup>

Lieutenant General George Washington to the Marquis de Lafayette, 15 August 1781

The words of the Continental Marine Committee and General George Washington demonstrate that for the American military neither the concept nor the term, "joint" operations, are inventions of the twentieth century or even of the post-Goldwater-Nichols era. American, Continental military and naval forces, always outnumbered by the fleets of the Royal Navy, cooperated to the greatest extent possible in the War of Independence; after 1777 French fleets filled in and gave the

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<sup>1</sup>Continental Marine Committee to Captains Thomas Grennell and John Hodge and to New York Council of Safety, 26 June 1777, Charles Oscar Paullin, ed., Out-Letters of the Continental Marine Committee and Board of Admiralty, August, 1776-September, 1780, 2 vols. (New York: De Vinne Press, 1914), 146; also in William Bell Clark and William James Morgan, eds., Naval Documents of the American Revolution, 9 vols. to date (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1964-), 9:176-177.

<sup>2</sup>George Washington to the Marquis de Lafayette, 15 Aug. 1781, Stanley J. Idzerda, ed., Lafayette in the Age of the American Revolution: Selected Letters and Papers, 1776-1790, 5 vols. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 4:330.



Americans a naval capability for multinational or combined, joint operations that they would not have otherwise enjoyed. The opponents of the Americans and the French, the British Army and Royal Navy, likewise started almost every major campaign of the war with the most common joint operation: amphibious expeditions, landing soldiers from naval vessels onto a hostile shore, supported by elements of a fleet. The services of Great Britain and the United States would continue to follow this pattern until well into the twentieth century.

From the American Revolution this study will attempt to answer four questions using two case studies; the paper will focus on operations in the Hudson Highlands in October 1777 and then draw some tentative conclusions by way of an epilogue from those around upper Manhattan in the summer of 1781. The primary players will be the British and Americans; the French will make only cameo appearances. First, in order to set the context for joint operations on the Hudson River, why was it one of the most, if not the most, critical theaters of operations during the War of Independence? Second, why had Lieutenant General Sir Henry Clinton's and Commodore William Hotham's joint expedition against the Hudson Highlands in October 1777 been so successful? Third, how effectively did the Americans integrate their naval and land forces into joint operations on the Hudson in 1777 and then again in 1781? Finally, what were the key ingredients of the joint operations

in the two case studies, the presence of which helped to produce success or absence of which contributed to failure? This approach will allow the reader to see that true "jointness" requires the integration of joint forces and doctrine at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war. The time limitations of the Advanced Research Project forced the less detailed analysis of the operations in 1781. Nonetheless, the tentative conclusions for joint operations as Washington planned and executed this campaign with the French are suggestive.

The works of early commentators and historians documented that joint operations have been a common practice in the United Kingdom and the United States since at least the eighteenth century. In 1759 Thomas More Molyneux, a British officer, wrote a book, Conjunct Expeditions, based upon the present day understanding of joint operations--"any Operations that have been jointly transacted by the Fleet and Army"--and referring to them as "this amphibious kind of Warfare." The Navy's new strategy, Forward . . . From the Sea, has brought back into usage another of Molyneux's terms, littoral warfare: "where our Fleet and Army act together . . . ." <sup>3</sup> David Syrett in 1972 accepted the terminology of amphibious operations without discussion and concluded that during the Seven Years War and the American Revolution, the British developed a

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<sup>3</sup>Thomas More Molyneux, Conjunct Expeditions: or Expeditions That have been carried on jointly by the FLEET and ARMY, with a Commentary on a Littoral War (London: R. and D. Dodsley, 1759), vi, 2.

"highly sophisticated scheme for conducting amphibious landings . . ." and that they "gained much from the exploitation of naval power through amphibious warfare . . ." during those two conflicts.<sup>4</sup> His article lays out the details of the methodology that evolved for practicing amphibious operations over the latter half of the eighteenth century.

Studies about the historical antecedents of joint operations and doctrine have become even more critical as the American military establishment focuses on improving its jointness, and at least two historians have risen to the challenge. In 1989 Michael J. Crawford explored the ill-fated French and American operation against British forces in Rhode Island in 1778 using the terminology, "joint allied operation" in his title. Like Syrett, he does not dwell on either that term or amphibious operations but critiques an expedition that was clearly both. He found that the venture failed, not because of the "inability of the allies to cooperate" or the strategy or methods that they had attempted, but rather because of "deficiencies in three key areas where the British excelled: good military intelligence, speed, and boldness."<sup>5</sup>

Richard Harding, writing in 1991, accepts the formulation of Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond from 1941 for his definition of amphibious warfare and provides a monograph about the

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<sup>4</sup>David Syrett, "The Methodology of British Amphibious Operations During the Seven Years And American Wars," The Mariner's Mirror 58(1972): 269, 277.

<sup>5</sup>Michael J. Crawford, "The Joint Allied Operations at Rhode Island, 1778," in New Interpretations in Naval History, eds. William R. Roberts and Jack Sweetman (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1991), 227, 239.

British use of it in their expedition to the West Indies from 1740-42. While his conclusions are more broadly gauged, to include a reassessment of William Pitt's conduct, he demonstrates that British failures were not methodological and that innovative practices attributed to the Seven Years War were being used as early as the campaign that he examined. He further found that "Success relied heavily upon the two services fully committing their resources on land and at sea, as the demands of a particular objective demanded. . . ."<sup>6</sup> This study will serve to verify conclusions from the earlier conflicts in the eighteenth century as they applied to the American Revolution and to draw insights relevant to practicing commanders and staff officers as they face the challenges of the future.

Professor Ira Gruber argued in his analysis of the Battle of Long Island that the American and British commanders who had opposed each other at Long Island had "shared a single military tradition" about the alternative strategies that they could employ--a war of posts or a classic "war of conquest" that involved the destruction of the opposing army.<sup>7</sup> The same was true of their understanding of joint operations. Americans had joined the British in their campaigns against

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<sup>6</sup>Richard Harding, Amphibious Warfare in the Eighteenth Century: The British Expedition to the West Indies, 1740-1742, Royal Historical Society Studies in History 62 (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 1991), 198-200.

<sup>7</sup>Ira D. Gruber, "Long Island," chap. in America's First Battles, 1776-1965, ed. Charles E. Heller and William A. Stofft (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1986), 4-5.

St. Augustine, the West Indies, and Louisbourg. As Syrett and Harding have persuasively shown, by the American Revolution the British had a highly developed doctrine and tactics, techniques, and procedures for conducting amphibious operations. Lacking a substantial battle fleet, the Americans would do the best that they could with joint operations within a strategy of guerre de course by privateering until the French entered the conflict. The presence of French fleets in North America allowed Washington in 1781, now an allied commander, to think in the same joint terms as Lieutenant General Sir Henry Clinton because the French naval and army commanders would prove to have a facility for using joint forces as well.

The events that occurred along the Hudson River during the American Revolution have fascinated historians and readers; unfortunately, few have focused on the joint nature of the operations that took place there. The Association of Graduates of the United States Military Academy reissued Lieutenant General (Retired) Dave R. Palmer's work on Fortress West Point, The River and the Rock.<sup>8</sup> Lincoln Diamant's publisher recently reissued his Chaining the Hudson in paperback.<sup>9</sup> Writers have produced two recent books about the

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<sup>8</sup>Dave Richard Palmer, The River and the Rock: The History of Fortress West Point, 1775-1783 (New York: Greenwood Publishing Corporation, 1969; reprint, New York: Hippocrene Books, 1991).

<sup>9</sup>Lincoln Diamant, Chaining the Hudson: The Fight for the River in the American Revolution (New York: Lyle Stuart, Carol Publishing Group, 1989; reprint, New York: Citadel Press, Carol Publishing Group, 1994).

treason of Major General Benedict Arnold, which took place against the backdrop of West Point and the Hudson Highlands.<sup>10</sup> All of these works have made contributions by keeping interest in the American Revolution alive and by highlighting the Hudson's role then. However, only one monograph has focused on the fight at Forts Montgomery and Clinton in 1777, and none has been dedicated to Washington's and General Rochambeau's actions around Dobbs Ferry and Kingsbridge in 1781.<sup>11</sup> This project will be the first to conduct an in-depth analysis of the joint (and combined in the latter) aspects of either year.

Organizationally, this paper will address first the significance of the Hudson River as a theater of operations to show how after the fall of 1776 it fit within Washington's and Clinton's strategy of a war of posts. Because of the river itself and the fact that New York City was a port, both commanders could use joint operations to accomplish the objectives of their respective strategies. In his "Sentiments on a Peace Establishment" in 1783, Washington argued that the fortifications at West Point on the Hudson River--his major pivot point throughout the war--had been the "key of America."<sup>12</sup> The British made the "line of the Hudson" the

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<sup>10</sup>Willard Sterne Randall, Benedict Arnold: Patriot and Traitor (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1990) and Claire Brandt, The Man in the Mirror: A Life of Benedict Arnold (New York: Random House, 1994).

<sup>11</sup>William H. Carr and Richard J. Koke, Twin Forts of the Popolopen: Forts Clinton and Montgomery, New York, 1775-1777, Historical Bulletin no. 1 (Bear Mountain, NY: Commissioners of the Palisades Interstate Park and the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society, July, 1937).

<sup>12</sup>George Washington, The Writings of Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources 1745-1799, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick, 39 vols. (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1931-1944), 26: 382.

centerpiece of their strategies to take New York City in 1776, Albany in the Saratoga campaign of 1777, Stony Point in 1779, and West Point in 1780 (with the assistance of its commander, Arnold). Clinton, who was involved in all four of these plans, later wrote that "the River Hudson naturally presents itself as a very important object."<sup>13</sup> Both Washington and Clinton by their actions during the war established that the Hudson River, with West Point and the Highlands as the key for the Americans and New York City as the anchor for the British, had been as important a theater of operations as they had written. Military geography, political considerations, resources, lines of communications, fortifications, and garrisons of troops converted their rhetoric into reality.

From 1776 until the war's end, opposing armies maneuvered up and down and around the critical Hudson River. Clashing strategies led to the two campaigns that will be the case studies for this paper. In October 1777 Clinton would use an army of about 3,000 British, German, and provincial forces and a large naval flotilla under Commodore William Hotham to take Forts Clinton, Montgomery, Independence, and Constitution, to burn the New York state capital at Kingston, and to range the Hudson as far north as Livingston Manor. Following doctrine and practices developed in the earlier wars of the century,

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<sup>13</sup>Sir Henry Clinton, The American Rebellion: Sir Henry Clinton's Narrative of his Campaigns, 1775-1782, with an Appendix of Original Documents, ed. William B. Willcox (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), 11

this operation was a model for the planning and execution of a joint, amphibious operation. By contrast, the New Yorkers, with a meager force of some 600 militia braced with a few Continentals, failed miserably in their attempt to foil Clinton's plans, despite the best of intentions from a small naval force of two frigates, a sloop, and two row galleys and Major General Israel Putnam and at least 900 men sitting helplessly on the opposite bank of the Hudson. While they shared a heritage in such joint matters, the Americans ineffectively integrated their forces and allowed themselves to be outgeneraled and overpowered in an uneven duel. Desperate courage could not overcome professional expertise.

By 1781 the entry of the French into the war had shifted the military balance more in the favor of Washington and his Continental Army. By cooperating with Lieutenant General Jean Baptiste Donatien de Vimeur, Count of Rochambeau and calling upon the fleet of Admiral François Joseph Paul, the Count, de Grasse, Washington was able to mount a credible threat against a fleetless Clinton and his New York garrison. Using the assets now at his disposal, including boats and French frigates, he conducted raids and initiated a siege that he called off only because de Grasse's arrival in the Chesapeake Bay forced his hand so that Lord Cornwallis, rather than Henry Clinton, became his quarry. As was clear from his correspondence, Washington had always seen the possibilities



of integrating naval and military assets; his Allies gave him the resources to act upon his understanding. By 1781 Washington, with Rochambeau's help and the cooperation of de Grasse, had emerged as a practitioner of joint and combined operations.

From the case studies of operations on the Hudson River some insights about joint operations emerge that are as revealing as if they had come from DESERT STORM or Haiti. Throughout the middle of the eighteenth century, successful joint operations for the British were the products of a heritage of cooperation between the army and the navy resulting from the insular nature of the British state. Jointness started as political leaders and senior commanders began planning at the strategic levels. They chose appropriate objectives to fulfill the political purposes of the war. Since these objectives were generally beyond the shores of England, commanders had to conduct joint operations to accomplish the tasks. Senior leaders apportioned joint forces so that expeditionary commanders had the relative combat power to undertake the military tasks at the operational and tactical levels. The personalities and experiences of the respective commanders had a decisive bearing on their outcome; enthusiastic cooperation between naval and land commanders with constant consultation proved to be of paramount importance to bridge the gap between the

capabilities of their respective services. At the operational and tactical levels of war, intelligence, deception, surprise, communications, doctrine, and procedures made the difference between success and failure as they would in any military operation involving only a single service. In joint and combined operations, however, these components became even more significant because they required at least two services and, in the American case, two nations, to merge their respective capabilities into a single force under one overall commander against a series of common objectives. Joint operations by the British and the French and Americans had laid the foundation for the doctrine U.S. soldiers and sailors would use on lakes, coasts, and rivers in their wars of the nineteenth century.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE HUDSON RIVER: "SEAT OF THE WAR"

While a British regular or colonial Minuteman fired the first shot of the American Revolution on 19 April 1775 in New England, after British forces completed the evacuation of Boston, Massachusetts, on 17 March 1776, the "seat of the war" would become "the line of the Hudson."<sup>1</sup> From 23 October 1776, when the British gained control of Manhattan Island, until 25 November 1783, when their last troops relinquished it, they would occupy New York City as their central base of operations. Over these seven years, commanders of both sides would take advantage of the unique features of the Hudson theater to launch a series of joint and, later for the Americans and French, even combined operations here. The city figured so much in American plans that General George Washington would risk his entire army at Long Island and Manhattan to protect it from Lieutenant General Sir William Howe's mighty invasion force of almost 24,000 soldiers

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<sup>1</sup>Earl of Dartmouth to Lieut.-General Thomas Gage, 2 Aug. 1775, K. G. Davies, ed., Documents of the American Revolution, 1770-1783 (Colonial Office Series), vol. 11, Transcripts, 1775, July-December (Dublin: Irish University Press, 1976), 63-64; for a discussion of "the line of the Hudson" strategy, see Dave Richard Palmer, The Way of the Fox (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1975), 41-49 and River and the Rock, 46-47. Palmer attributes the name of the strategy to Sir John Fortescue, A History of the British Army (London: MacMillan and Co., 1911; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1976), 3:168.

supported by a fleet of some 430 ships in the late summer and fall of 1776. After Lieutenant General Sir Henry Clinton returned what had been Howe's field army from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, there in late June 1778, Washington would venture a significant distance from the Hudson Highlands with the Main Army of the Continental Army only once for the remainder of the war--to defeat General Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown.<sup>2</sup> What was there so critical about the Hudson River in the strategic thinking of British and Americans leaders that they made it the central theater of operations for most of the war? The "line of the Hudson" would become the "seat of the war" because Washington and his opponents from Gage to Howe to Clinton found that the river offered compelling advantages based on military geography, communications, population, industry, agriculture, political ties, and logistics that fit within a military strategy of a war of posts that they would each adopt in turn as the war progressed.

By the fall of 1777, the political aim of Great Britain pursued by King George III, his key ministers, his generals, and his admirals was to crush the rebellion of the colonies in North America. As early as 7 February 1776, Clinton had translated this to mean that he was "to gain the hearts &

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<sup>2</sup>Key dates were verified in Calvin D. Linton, ed., The Bicentennial Almanac (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson., 1975), 18, 20, 24, and 34.

subdue the minds of America.'"<sup>3</sup> Since the signing of the Declaration of Independence on 4 July 1776, Patriots in the American colonies, represented by the Continental Congress and served by Washington in his capacity as commander in chief, had the clear objective of severing their political ties with the mother country and pursuing a new course as a sovereign nation. This clash of vital, national interests, in modern parlance, had led the leaders of both sides to resort to military means to fulfill their political ends. First General Howe and his brother, Admiral Richard ("Black Dick"), Lord Howe, and then Clinton for the British and Washington for the Americans had to design a military strategy that would accomplish their respective political mandates.

Howe, Clinton, and Washington, as military commanders, shared a common tradition insofar as the forms of strategy available to them.<sup>4</sup> From their classical education, they knew that successful generals from Alexander the Great to Hannibal to Caesar had destroyed the armies of their opponents, today's military strategy of annihilation. Sir William demonstrated his understanding of that concept during the course of the Parliamentary inquiry into his conduct of the war in 1779:

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<sup>3</sup>Memo. of conversation, 7 February 1776, Clinton Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, quoted in Stephen Conway, "To Subdue America: British Army Officers and the Conduct of the Revolutionary War," William and Mary Quarterly 43 (July 1986): 381.

<sup>4</sup>Gruber, "Long Island," 4-5; for more elaboration, see Gruber, "British Strategy: The Theory and Practice of Eighteenth-Century Warfare," chap. in Don Higginbotham, ed., Reconsiderations of the Revolutionary War: Selected Essays (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978), 30-31, in which he argues that overall British strategy was "ambiguous" involving wars of posts and "the aggressive war of movement and battles."

And as my opinion has always been, that defeat of the rebel regular army is the surest road to peace, I invariably pursued the most probable means of forcing its Commander to action under circumstances the least hazardous to the royal army; for even a victory, attended by a heavy loss of men on our part, would have given a fatal check to the progress of the war, and might have proved irreparable.<sup>5</sup>

Clinton, perhaps because he shared Howe's concerns about losses, never once in his tenure as commander in chief fought a pitched battle with his complete army against Washington's Continental Army. Washington, on the other hand, accepted battles against Howe to protect first New York City and then Philadelphia. Clinton and Washington after Long Island showed a predilection toward a different form of strategy for the remainder of the war.

The second, strategic alternative was the rage in the wars of the eighteenth century on the Continent--a war of posts; today such a strategy would be labeled exhaustion since its object was to destroy the enemy's will to continue the conflict. This strategy owed its foundation to commanders and writers such as Vegetius, the Marquis de Feuquières, and Marshal Maurice de Saxe, who had influenced soldiers with their ideas about sieges, maneuver, and attrition.<sup>6</sup> Captain

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<sup>5</sup>Lieutenant General Sir William Howe, The NARRATIVE of Lieut. Gen. Sir William Howe in a Committee of the House of Commons on the 29th of April, 1779, Relative to HIS CONDUCT, during his late Command of the King's Troops in NORTH AMERICA: to which is added, Some Observations upon a Pamphlet, entitled Letters to a Nobleman (London: H. Baldwin, 1780), 19; also quoted Maldwyn A. Jones, "Sir William Howe: Conventional Strategist," in George Athan Billias, George Washington's Generals and Opponents: Their Exploits and Leadership (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1964, 1969; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1994), 65.

<sup>6</sup>Gruber in Higginbotham, 20-21.

George Smith in his An Universal Military Dictionary of 1779 laid out the guidelines for a war of posts under the term, "defensive war"; using this strategy the general should:

Chuse advantageous camps, proper to stop the enemy, without however being obliged to fight them; to multiply small advantages; to hem in the enemy in their forages, and to oblige them to do so with great escorts; to attack their escorts; to render the passages of rivers or defiles as difficult as possible; to force them to keep together: . . . in short, in the beginning, his chief aim should be, to acquire the enemy's respect by his vigilance and activity, and by forcing him to be circumspect in his marches and manner of encampment, in order to gain time himself, and make the enemy lose it.

Smith went further to draw the conclusion that "a defensive war requires more military judgement than that of an offensive one."<sup>7</sup> One of Smith's peers, Major Thomas Bell, provided the rationale for Smith's view that prevailed in Europe at the time: "'Battles have ever been the last resource of good Generals. . . . The fighting of a battle only because the enemy is near, or from having no other plan of offence, is a direful way of making war.'"<sup>8</sup>

With occasional diversions against the opposing main army, the respective commanders in chief of the American and British armies in North America generally subscribed to strategies of wars of posts. Washington on 8 September 1776, after he had failed disastrously in his pursuit of the first

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<sup>7</sup>Captain George Smith, An Universal Military Dictionary (London: J. Millan, 1779; reprint, Ottawa: Museum Restoration Service, 1969), 253.

<sup>8</sup>Major Thomas Bell, A Short Essay on Military First Principles (London, 1770), quoted in Jones in Billias, 66-67.

alternative at Long Island, characterized what he was prepared to do in the future as a defensive war:

In deliberating on this Question it was impossible to forget, that History, our own experience, the advice of our ablest Friends in Europe, the fears of the Enemy, and even the Declarations of Congress demonstrate, that on our Side the War should be defensive. It has even been called a War of Posts. That we should on all Occasions avoid a general Action, or put anything to the Risque, unless compelled by a necessity, into which we ought never to be drawn.<sup>9</sup>

He would violate his own pledge of "never" only twice: at Brandywine and Germantown in the fall of 1777 and at Yorktown against only Cornwallis's army in October 1781. His battles at Trenton, Princeton, and Monmouth Court House confronted only detachments of the enemy main force, not the principal army itself.

Concerned about losses of manpower and the potential of handing independence to the Patriots with a climactic loss on the battlefield, the British commanders in chief thought along the same lines as Washington even while allowing subordinates such as Cornwallis and the turned Brigadier General Benedict Arnold to execute more aggressive campaigns. Sir William Howe's British biographer characterized him as a "conventional strategist" who was drawn to a war of posts. He doubted Howe's assertion that he had always made the Continental Army "his primary objective"; he concluded rather that Howe had directed his efforts toward "occupying territory" and that his

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<sup>9</sup>George Washington to the President of Congress, 8 September 1776, Fitzpatrick, Writings, 6: 28.



"strategic planning was based on the assumption that the civilian population could be cowed into submission by an overwhelming display of force."<sup>10</sup> The possible "heavy loss of men" and the potential for a "fatal check" weighed on Howe's thinking even as he singled out the rebel army as most important objective--Clausewitz's center of gravity.

Following Howe, Sir Henry Clinton in every major operation that he undertook oriented on key posts such as those in the Hudson Highlands or seaports (Charleston or Newport) necessary to maintain the occupying forces and the lines of communications with England. By December 1778 the British strategy was so obvious to the American leadership that Alexander Scammell, the Adjutant General of the Continental Army, noted that "Great Britain is now reduced to a defensive plan of operations [sic]."<sup>11</sup> The French had altered the strategic equation. This common, strategic tie to a war of posts would define the Hudson River, the Hudson Highlands, and New York City, with their links to the sea, as pivots around which the armies would maneuver.

To complement the war of posts on land, the British throughout the war and the Americans, particularly after the French entrance into the conflict, added the component of sea power to their military strategy. The British initiated

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<sup>10</sup>Jones in Billias, 39.

<sup>11</sup>Alexander Scammell to Dr. Saml. L. Scammell, LS, 30 Dec. 1778, Alexander Scammell, Letters, Special Collections, United States Military Academy Library, West Point, NY.

almost every major campaign with a joint, amphibious operation with soldiers launched from naval vessels supported by elements of a fleet from the Royal Navy. Their land commanders understood that they gained at least three advantages by using amphibious operations instead of traveling overland through neutral or hostile territory: mobility, security to fend off enemy threats, and strategic surprise. In expeditions against New York, Newport, Philadelphia, Savannah, and Charleston the British proved that, until confronted by the French, they were masters of the sea and hence joint operations--unmatched and virtually uncontested for the first three years of the conflict.

With a planned fleet of only thirteen frigates, the Americans alone were never able to challenge the British expeditions at sea. The lack of a strong navy comparable to that of the British limited Washington's ability to mount joint operations; privateering or commerce raiding thus became the primary contribution of the American navy.<sup>12</sup> No one put the predicament faced by the Americans as they tried to defend a coastline of some 1,500 miles from Savannah to Boston as colorfully as Major General Charles Lee:

I am like a Dog in a dancing school. I know not where to turn myself, the circumstances of the Country intersected by navigable rivers, the uncertainty of the Enemy's designs and motions, who can fly in an instant to any spot They choose with their canvass wings, throw me, or woud [sic] throw Julius Caesar, into

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<sup>12</sup>Charles Oscar Paullin, The Navy of the American Revolution: Its Administration, its Policy, and its Achievements (1906; reprint, New York: Haskell House Publisher, 1971), 92-93, 163.

this inevitable dilemma. I may possibly be in the North, when, as Richard says, I should serve my Sovereign in the West. I can only act from surmise, and have a very good chance of surmising wrong.<sup>13</sup>

Even from a position of relative naval weakness vis-à-vis the British, Washington emerged as a commander who understood how maritime power contributed to his operations on land. His estimate of the British advantage echoed that penned by Lee: "The amazing advantage the Enemy derive from their Ships and the Command of the Water, keeps us in a State of constant perplexity and the most anxious conjecture."<sup>14</sup> Navy Captain Dudley W. Knox wrote in 1932 that "the American General, with extraordinary perception, grew to understand the primary naval nature of the war . . ." and went so far as to honor him as "one of the greatest naval geniuses of history."<sup>15</sup> While this may border on hyperbole, Knox based his judgment upon the numerous letters by Washington dealing with maritime matters. A key piece of evidence that he offered was Washington's letter to Lieutenant General Rochambeau and Admiral Charles Louis d'Arsac, the Chevalier, de Ternay in which he noted that "In any operation, and under all circumstances a decisive Naval superiority is to be considered as a fundamental principle, and the basis upon which every hope of success must

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<sup>13</sup>Charles Lee to Washington, 5 Apr. 1776, Fitzpatrick, Writings, 4:451n.

<sup>14</sup>Washington to President of Congress, 25 July 1777, *ibid.*, 8:470.

<sup>15</sup>Dudley W. Knox, The Naval Genius of George Washington (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1932),

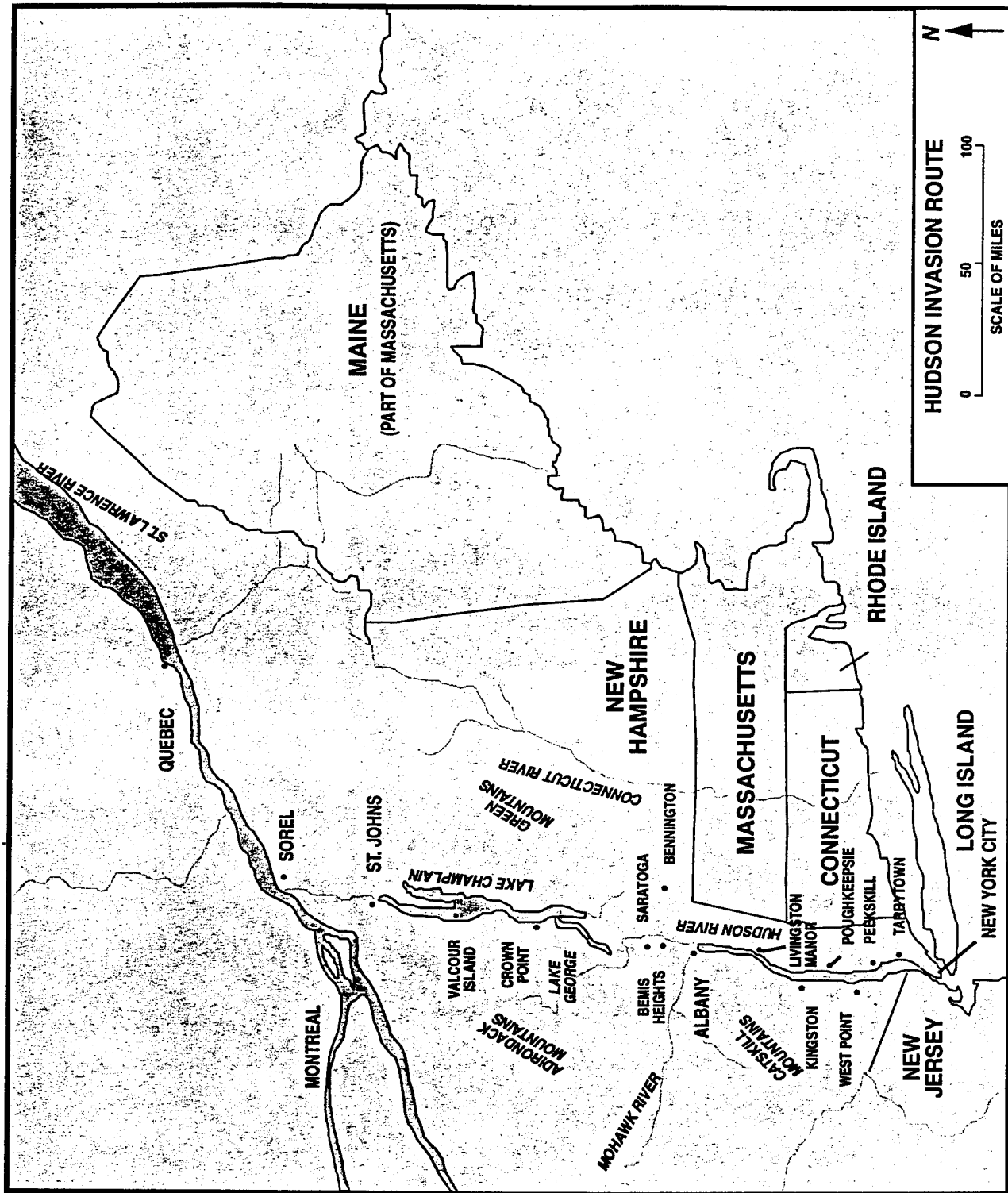
ultimately depend."<sup>16</sup> Although small flotillas would help to resist British amphibious operations and even support similar, limited American operations, "decisive naval superiority" would not be available until French fleets arrived off American shores. Until then and even after, the American naval effort would be privateering directed at British commerce and their long, logistical tail, an effort for which Washington gets credit in helping to launch.<sup>17</sup>

French naval power changed the equation at sea drastically for the Americans, introducing the potential of fleet against fleet actions that could, and did in the Yorktown campaign, sever the link between British land and naval forces. The French also configured their forces in the American theater so that they could conduct joint, amphibious expeditions, which they did at Savannah, Newport, and Yorktown. Once Admiral de Grasse sailed with his fleet from the West Indies in August 1781, he fixed Clinton at New York until the French expedition stopped at the Chesapeake Bay. The maritime dimension of the war of posts as a part of joint expeditions would play out in the operations on the Hudson in 1777 and 1781.

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<sup>16</sup> "Memorandum for Concerting a Plan of Operations," 15 July 1780, Washington to the Marquis de Lafayette, Fitzpatrick, *Writings*, 19:174.

<sup>17</sup> For a discussion of Washington's "part in launching the Colonies upon aggressive naval warfare" see William Bell Clark, *George Washington's Navy: Being an Account of His Excellency's Fleet in New England Waters* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1960), v-vi.



As the opposing commanders tried to exploit or deny the advantages inherent in the Hudson River as a joint theater of operations in their war of posts, they had to come to grips with the realities that the river imposed. The most obvious factor was that of military geography: nature through major "geologic events," including differential erosion and glaciers of the Pleistocene ice ages, had carved out the course for a waterway of some 275 miles to flow to the Atlantic Ocean.<sup>18</sup> In addition, these forces had created the mountain ranges, the Catskills, the Shawangunks and the Highlands, of the Reading Prong that were barriers to east-west travel. Gaps created by the Hudson, the Ramapo, and the Delaware rivers provided the only crossing points through the Highlands. By controlling key locations, such as the Highlands and Smith's Clove to the west, for example, Washington could render the three valleys that expedited friendly movement in the northeast-southwest direction virtually "immune from attack by the British. . . ." <sup>19</sup>

Depending upon the military strategy of the antagonists in any given year, the Hudson, or North River as it was also called, by way of Lake George and/or Lake Champlain, and its Highlands served as an invasion route to or from Canada or a

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<sup>18</sup>U. S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Ocean Survey, United States Coast Pilot: Atlantic Coast: Cape Cod to Sandy Hook, 14th ed. (Washington: National Ocean Survey, 1979), 256; Captain John H. Munson and Colonel John B. Garver, Jr., Field Guide to the Hudson Highlands and Fortress West Point (West Point: Department of Earth, Space and Graphic Sciences, 1976), 1, 5, 8.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid*, 11-13.

line of communications linking respective naval and land forces or denying them such an advantage. The estuary itself, affected by tidal change as much as 4.6 feet in Albany, was navigable for some 146 miles from New York City to that town.<sup>20</sup> Henry Knox noted that a ship leaving Sandy Hook "at the close of the day" could reach West Point "before the next morning."<sup>21</sup>

The Hudson served as a nexus of the population, industrial, and agricultural centers of New England and the Middle Atlantic states. It drew early explorers, traders, and settlers to its banks so that by 1770 New York's population numbered some 162,920 whites and African-Americans. From a general populace that placed the entire colony only seventh in residents, New York City would rank as the second most populated city in the provinces behind Philadelphia.<sup>22</sup> To the Hudson's north and east recruiters could draw upon the manpower of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Connecticut from an overall population in 1770 of 572,048 and to its south and west the 595,583 residents of New Jersey, Delaware, Pennsylvania, and Maryland.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Coast Pilot, 256.

<sup>21</sup>Knox Report, 2.; for a description of a journey from New York City to Albany, see Richard Smith, A Tour of the Hudson, the Mohawk, the Susquehanna, and the Delaware in 1769 Being the Journal of Richard Smith of Burlington, New Jersey, ed. Francis W. Halsey (New York: Scribner's, 1906; reprint, Fleischmanns, NY: Purple Mountain Press, 1989), 69-84.

<sup>22</sup>U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970 (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1975), 1168; Robert B. Roberts, New York's Forts in the Revolution (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1980), 261; Lester J. Cappon, ed., Atlas of Early American History: the Revolutionary Era, 1760-1790 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 23, 25.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.; Historical Statistics, 1168.

By dividing the vast recruiting grounds surrounding New York, the Hudson gave to its possessor a power over the base of the military strength available to it and expedited or hindered the movement of militia and regular units from one theater of operations or department to the next. There were political implications as well. Because the river formed the southern boundary of New England, the British felt that control of it would allow them to mount military operations to isolate from the remaining insurgents what they thought was the center of the rebellion in Massachusetts and its neighbors. Victory in the French and Indian War had given the British political authority over Canada--a base from which such operations could be mounted.

The effect of the Hudson on military manpower and political support for the war also affected the flow of foodstuffs and industrial products, ranging from salt to iron. New York in 1775, for example, exported to England goods valued at £187,018, exceeding the total of the exports of all of New England (£116,588), and its capital was one of the five major seaports for the colonies.<sup>24</sup> The Hudson was the crucial economic artery for the colony and was a major factor in the overland patterns of trade during the war when the British controlled the port and, with the blockade imposed by their fleets, the coast as well. Between the limits of the British

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 1179-81.



lines near Manhattan northward to Newburgh, teamsters and farmers had to depend on the ferry between there and Fishkill and the King's Ferry between Stony and Verplanck's points to move their goods between the neighboring states. Textiles from Connecticut and iron from the Hudson Valley southward had to cross the Hudson to reach consumers on the opposite banks. The river affected the transfer of cattle and grain and its finished product flour.<sup>25</sup> The control that New Yorkers exerted over the more northern reaches of the Hudson also meant that they could use it for commercial intercourse, filling boats and sloops with goods.

All of the factors bearing on commercial enterprise affected the logistics of the respective armies as well. Denied the produce of the interior as the war progressed, the British had to depend largely on England for the supplies that it had obtained locally before the war; commanders had to organize "foraging expeditions" to seize needed livestock, firewood, fresh produce, and forage.<sup>26</sup> American quartermasters and commissaries had to worry about the procurement, processing, and distribution of the staples of logistics, using or passing over the Hudson as Washington and other commanders deployed their armies. Fishkill, upriver from West Point, became a depot in 1779 "for the small Articles of

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<sup>25</sup>Field Guide, iv, Cappon, 29, 30.

<sup>26</sup>R. Arthur Bowler, "Logistics and Operations in the American Revolution" in Higginbotham, 63, 67-68.

Shirts, Shoes, Hose, &c."<sup>27</sup> Contractors had to mix salt from the coastal works of New Jersey and Virginia with butchered cattle and hogs from New England to produce the salt beef and pork consumed by the Continentals and militiamen on active duty. The Hudson proved vital to the economy and the armies attempting to exploit it to survive the trying conditions of the war.<sup>28</sup> Soldiers and sailors would work throughout the Revolution to exploit the river and its Highlands for their purposes.

Confronting the facts relating to the Hudson River, Washington drew his conclusions about its strategic importance and began committing resources to it even before he was the commander in chief of Continental forces. He had served during the French and Indian War when the French and British had fought over Crown Point and Fort Ticonderoga guarding the gates to the Hudson River on the one end and the St. Lawrence on the other. He had formally recognized the military value of the Hudson as least as early as May 1775, when he had served on a committee of the Continental Congress that had recommended fortifying both of its sides in the Hudson Highlands.

The Continental Congress accepted the committee's findings on 25 May and directed the erection of batteries

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<sup>27</sup>Washington to George Measam, 18 Jan. 1779, Fitzpatrick, Writings, 14: 22.

<sup>28</sup>Erna Risch, Supplying Washington's Army (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1981), 128, 200, 202.

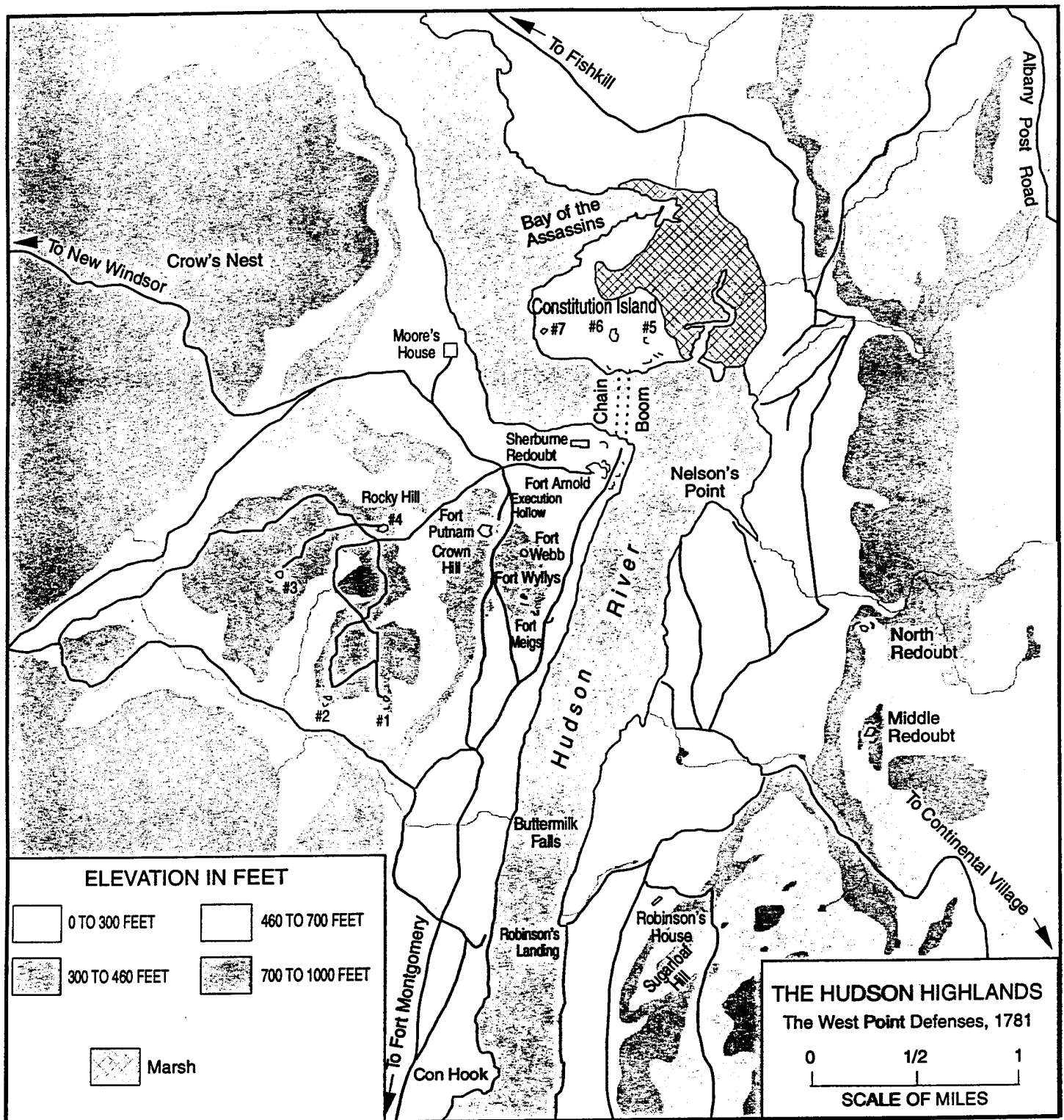
there "in such manner as will most effectually prevent any vessels passing that may be sent to harass the inhabitants on the borders of said river." Congress also directed New York to send "experienced persons" to find the best location from which to block the river and to plan for the garrisons to "occupy the several posts." The report of Christopher Tappen and future Continental general, James Clinton, delegates to the New York Provincial Congress and residents of the Hudson Valley, on 13 June would set the course for the future since the site that they chose would come to be called West Point.<sup>29</sup>

By the time the British ventured north against the fortifications of the Highlands in October 1777, the defensive works would show the signs of the stake that the Continental Congress, the New York Provincial Congress, and Washington had already put into the joint defense of the Hudson.

Unfortunately, the Americans had not completed Forts Montgomery or Clinton on Popolopen Creek, the batteries overlooking the chevaux-de-frise (iron-tipped, wooden stakes protruding from sunken log cribs filled with rocks) from

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<sup>29</sup> Worthington Chauncy Ford, ed., Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789 34 vols. (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1905), 2: 52-53, 57, 59-60; Peter Force, ed., American Archives, 4th ser., 6 vols. (Washington: M. St. Clair Clark and Peter Force, 1837-1853) 2: 844-45; George Washington, The Diaries of George Washington, 1771-75, 1780-81, ed. Donald Jackson, 6 vols. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978), 3: 330-31; report of James Clinton and Christopher Tappen to the New York Provincial Congress, 13 June 1775, Force, 2: 1296, map, 736; New York, Journal of the Provincial Congress, 30 May and 13 June 1775, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, Records of the States of the United States, Reel 1, microfilm, pp. 20, 40-41, hereinafter cited by page number from the respective New York governing body; the report is also in Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789 (New York State Papers, 1775-1788), Roll 81, Record Group 360 (M247), National Archives, Washington, DC, pp. 288-290, map, p. 286, microfilm, hereinafter cited as Papers, Continental Congress.



Pollepel's Island to Plum Point near New Windsor, nor the complex called Fort Constitution on Martelaer's Rock. Despite the presence of a chain and an improvised boom, backed up by two frigates of the Continental Navy, a New York sloop, and two Continental row galleys, blocking the channel near Anthony's Nose, the lack of sufficient regulars and militiamen to man the works would doom them to capture.

Stung by the defeats in the Highlands and near Philadelphia, Washington would focus his strategic vision on the Hudson River and the city of New York that anchored it for the remainder of the war. His fixation on the Hudson would lead him to concern himself with the construction of the works that would fortify it throughout the conflict: at Martelaer's Rock (Constitution Island), along Popolopen Creek, near the King's Ferry, and finally, at West Point. No sooner had Clinton's expedition fallen back downstream than Washington was communicating with Governor George Clinton of New York about the need to rebuild key positions. Echoing the original report by his brother and Tappen in June 1775, Clinton would agree with the commander in chief by proposing that West Point in conjunction with Fort Constitution be the site of the next generation of defensive fortifications because it was "the most defensible Ground and because the Navigation of the River

there is more difficult & uncertain and the River something narrower than it is at the former place."<sup>30</sup>

In a letter to Major General Israel Putnam on 2 December, Washington had laid out his rationale for supporting Clinton's judgment and resurrecting the defenses from the ashes. The Hudson, he wrote,

runs thro' a whole State; That it is the only passage by which the Enemy from New York, or any part of our Coast, can ever hope to cooperate with an Army that may come from Canada; that the possession of it is indispensibly essential to preserve the Communication between the Eastern, Middle, and Southern States; and further, that upon its security, in a great measure, depend our chief supplies of Flour. . . .<sup>31</sup>

Then Secretary of War Henry Knox reinforced his commander in chief's views in 1786 based on what he had learned first hand as a major general when he had commanded West Point at the end of the war: "That in case of an invasion of any of the middle or eastern states by a marine power the possession of Hudson's river would be an object of the highest importance, as well to the invader, as to the United States."<sup>32</sup>

By the time Washington moved his army south from the Highlands to Dobbs Ferry to threaten the British on Manhattan Island, he had left behind a series of fortifications at West Point that had deterred Clinton from moving further north than

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<sup>30</sup>Washington to George Clinton, 3 Dec. 1777, Fitzpatrick, Writings, 14: 135; George Clinton to Washington, 22 Dec. 1777, George Clinton, Public Papers of George Clinton, First Governor of New York 1777-1795-1801-1804, ed. Hugh Hastings, 10 vols. (Albany, NY: State printers, 1899-1914), 2: 591.

<sup>31</sup>Washington to Israel Putnam, 2 Dec. 1777, Fitzpatrick, Writings, 10: 129-133.

<sup>32</sup>Report Secy at War, 31 July 1786, Henry Knox, Papers, Special Collections, USMA Library, West Point, NY, 1.

Stony Point since 1779. In fact, Sir Henry would do no more than plan, and even his planning for 1780 depended on the treasonous acts of Major General Arnold. A chain, for at least one season protected by a boom, stretching from Constitution Island to Chain Battery Cove beneath the guns of Fort Arnold (Clinton) and four water batteries, was the centerpiece of Fortress West Point. Sherburne's Redoubt to the north, Forts Meigs, Wyllis, and Webb to the south, and Fort Putnam on Crown Hill to the west protected the back of Fort Arnold. Nine redoubts on both sides of the river, combined with a Grand Battery on the site of the old Fort Montgomery, established an outer ring for early warning and a defense-in-depth.<sup>33</sup>

Washington always garrisoned this fortress with a cadre of Continental regiments, normally equaling a reinforced division, with a system of signal guns and beacons to call in the militia from the surrounding counties of New York and Connecticut.<sup>34</sup> So critical did he view this area that he created within his Middle Department a separate command, the Highlands Department; he appointed for a colonel and later a general officer to command it. He usually kept the Continental Main Army under his direct command nearby.<sup>35</sup> Even

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<sup>33</sup>For the best description of these fortifications, see Charles E. Miller, Jr., Donald V. Lockey, and Joseph Visconti, Highland Fortress: The Fortification of West Point During the American Revolution, 1775-1783, ed. Tom Veleker and Larry Ghormley (West Point: Department of History, 1979; reprint, 1988).

<sup>34</sup>E.M. Ruttenger, "The Beacons and Signals," The North Jersey Highlander 12 (Fall 1976): 3-15.

<sup>35</sup>Robert K. Wright, Jr. The Continental Army (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1983), 83, 95, 151.

when he quartered his army in New Jersey at Middlebrook or Morristown for the winters of 1778 and 1779, the valleys stretching from there to the Highlands screened his movements and gave him the ability to move quickly to reinforce the garrison.<sup>36</sup> From the vantage point of his formidable fortress in the Highlands, Washington would continually fix his gaze upon the city forty-six miles to the south.<sup>37</sup>

Washington's obsession with New York City would dictate that he first try to defend it in the summer of 1776 and then retake it once the British had captured it. As he tried to anticipate the next move of the British after they had abandoned Boston, he and the Continental Congress recognized the critical nature of both the waterway and the city. In a letter to Governor Nicholas Cooke of Rhode Island on 21 March 1775, he and his generals singled out New York as their objective because it "secures the free and only Communication between the Northern and Southern Colonies, which will be intirely [sic] cut off by their possessing it, and give them the command of the Hudson's River and an easy pass into Canada."<sup>38</sup>

Before abandoning Manhattan after the British had taken Long Island, Washington wrote on 8 September 1776 to the President of the Continental Congress that New York City was

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<sup>36</sup>For Feb. 1779, for example, Charles H. Lesser, ed., The Sinews of Independence: Monthly Strength Reports of the Continental Army (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976), 104-105.

<sup>37</sup>Coast Pilot, 261.

<sup>38</sup>Washington to Governor Nicholas Cooke, 21 Mar. 1776, Fitzpatrick, Writings, 4: 414.



the "Key to the Northern Country." Strong fortifications there would insure "not only the navigation of the Hudson's River but an easier and better communication, may be effectually secured between the Northern and Southern States."<sup>39</sup> Washington thus saw that the Hudson River offered advantages to the side that possessed it. After the British controlled the city itself, he would return time and again to developing plans for regaining it, telling Admiral Charles Hector Theodat, the Count, d'Estaing on 4 October 1779, for example, that "New York is the first and capital object, upon which every other is dependant [sic]. The loss of the Army and the Fleet there, would be one of the severest Blows the English Nation could experience."<sup>40</sup> As long as he was commander in chief, Washington would never lose sight of the strategic consequences that the Hudson and New York had for the outcome of the Revolution.

With Washington's coaxing, French commanders would acknowledge that New York City was a worthy objective as they planned campaigns along the Atlantic seaboard. As soon as Count d'Estaing arrived with a French fleet in July 1778 he would threaten it and Howe's fleet bottled up there. In 1779, 1780, and 1781, Washington would try to persuade successive French generals and admirals that they should take America's "first" object. At the Hartford Convention in August 1780,

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<sup>39</sup>Washington to the President of Congress, 8 Sep. 1776, *ibid.*, 6: 29.

<sup>40</sup>Washington to Comte d'Estaing, 4 Oct. 1779, *ibid.*, 16: 411.

both Rochambeau and de Ternay would agree that "Of all the operations that we can undertake, the most important and the most decisive is the reduction of New York, which is the center and the focus of all the British forces." To which Washington responded: "New York is without doubt the first and foremost object we can have on this continent."<sup>41</sup> This agreement would lead to nothing in 1780 but would be the basis for the merging of Rochambeau's and Washington's armies near upper Manhattan in the summer of 1781. Adjutant General Scammell predicted in 1778 why even that attempt would fail: "What the British Army may want in Numbers, is made up in Situation, & by their strong naval Force & at present it would be rashness in us to attempt their strong Hold, unless we had command of the water."<sup>42</sup> The British would also understand the critical nature of the city and its surrounding "water."

The respective British commanders in chief would single out New York City and the Hudson as their primary operating base in the thirteen colonies. Lieutenant General Sir Thomas Gage selected New York as the port of entry to which the British should return after leaving Boston in March 1776 for Halifax, Nova Scotia. He summarized his reasons in a letter to the Earl of Dartmouth:

It has always appeared to me most advisable to make Hudson's River the seat of the war. Its situation between the eastern and western colonies is advantageous, besides being commodious in transporting

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<sup>41</sup>"Summary of the Hartford Conference," 22 Sep. 1780, Idzerda, 175-76.

<sup>42</sup>Alexander Scammell to Dr. Saml. L. Scammell, 30 Dec. 1778, Scammell Letters.

the necessities of an army. We are made to believe also that many friends in that province would appear in arms and the troops receive many supplies they are in want of. A communication with Canada might be better secured from thence than any other part and during winter, when the troops can't take the field, attempts might be made upon the southern provinces by embarking in the transports.<sup>43</sup>

Howe would accept his rationale, making New York his "first aim" and would take Manhattan Island after he had replaced Gage.<sup>44</sup> Even when the Howes moved against Philadelphia, Sir William would provide for the defense of what he called "this important post" by naming General Clinton as its commander and leaving behind sufficient troops to man its extensive fortifications and even to act "offensively, in case an opportunity should offer."<sup>45</sup> The British built a series of redoubts and forts, stretching from Staten Island to Fort Mifflin (Fort Mifflin) to Kingsbridge, backed by a number of ships, to protect their primary base.<sup>46</sup> Howe was confident that Fortress New York could hold its own even with his large force absent.

Whether or not the Hudson had made an impression on Henry Clinton as a boy when he lived in New York, he demonstrated throughout the war that he thought it to be "a very important object."<sup>47</sup> In his account of the war he offered a lengthy

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<sup>43</sup>Lieut.-General Thomas Gage to Earl of Dartmouth, 1 Oct. 1775, Davies, 11: 135.

<sup>44</sup>Major-General William Howe to Lord George Germain, 25 Apr. 1776, Davies, vol. 10, Calendar, 1 July 1775-1776, 10: 275.

<sup>45</sup>Sir William Howe to Sir Henry Clinton, 9 July 1777, Narrative, 22.

<sup>46</sup>Robert B. Roberts, New York's Forts in the Revolution (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1980), 261-336.

<sup>47</sup>Clinton, American Rebellion, 11.

explanation for this view. As had Washington and Gage, he noted that the Hudson would have been

a barrier between the southern and eastern colonies, which would have most effectually divided the strength of the inimical states by depriving those to the southwest of all assistance from the populous and hardy eastern provinces. . . . For, as long as a British army held the passes of that noble river and her cruisers swept their coasts, the colonists would have found it impossible to have joined and fed their respective quotas of troops. . . .

He argued that this control would have produced a scarcity of "bread corn" for the inhabitants to the east and "black cattle and horses in some of the others." He finished his analysis by noting the "ready intercourse" the Hudson provided with Canada "by the lakes." He would substantiate his views by protecting New York City throughout his tenure as commander in chief. Unfortunately, because he felt that the British should have secured the Hudson "on the first breaking out of the disturbances," he would never realize the potential that the Hudson seemed to offer to him for ending the war.<sup>48</sup>

The question of whether or not the British could ever have controlled the Hudson River had they chosen to extend their area of influence from New York City is intriguing but cannot be conclusively answered. The limitation upon complete control of the Hudson for the Americans boiled down to their inability to capture New York City without the presence of a French fleet and army prepared to conduct a joint operation

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 11-12.

and siege such as those attempted at Savannah and Newport. As for the British, Sir Henry Clinton speculated about the possibility of controlling the Hudson in a retrospective proposal. He offered that "had Mr. Gage been permitted to go at first with his whole force to New York . . . and Crown Point and Ticonderoga been put into a proper state of defense and suitably garrisoned, that whole province and Canada would have been secured."<sup>49</sup>

Lieutenant General John Burgoyne tried a variation of Clinton's idea in the fall of 1777; he had developed his own plan in February 1777.<sup>50</sup> His failed invasion from Canada provides as close to the answer as historians will probably ever get. Militia by the hundreds swarmed to halt the progress of his army near Saratoga, New York, and Bennington, Vermont, giving a clue as to the plight of any British force that attempted to venture too far into the American hinterlands. The British must have been shaken by the degree of Patriot support in a state that they had originally rated as second in numbers of Loyalists.<sup>51</sup> Control of the waterway itself might have been possible had the British committed the naval and ground resources required. Now in the pay of the British, Brigadier General Arnold argued in 1781 that, if this

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 20-21.

<sup>50</sup>Lieutenant General John Burgoyne, "Thoughts for conducting the War from the Side of Canada," A State of the Expedition from Canada Burgoyne (London: J. Almon, 1780; reprint, Arno Press, 1969), "Appendix," iii-xii.

<sup>51</sup>Roberts, 261.

control had only been of the Hudson Highlands, "Mr. Washington on Either Side of the River would be under the Necessity of Coming to a general Action or of disbanding his Army for want of Provisions."<sup>52</sup>

Clinton's and Commodore William Hotham's campaign of October 1777 and Clinton's and Sir George Collier's capture of Stony Point in May 1779 showed the potential for the extended control of the Hudson.<sup>53</sup> Instead, each of these operations ended up being no more than raids making British control beyond New York City transient. Clinton, justifying his failure to exploit his success at Stony Point in 1779, wrote that, without reinforcements, he was "much too weak in troops to retain that post [New York], break in upon or even threaten Mr. Washington's communications with his magazines, and secure those of my own. . . ."<sup>54</sup> Had the British on the other hand been willing to back their words about the strategic significance of the "line of the Hudson" with action, they might have crippled American operations by disrupting logistics, communications, commerce, and ultimately political support for the war.

Protecting or denying the vital, logistical and commercial artery of the Hudson to Briton and American alike

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<sup>52</sup>Brig. General Arnold to Lord Geo. Germain, 28 Oct. 1781, extracts from Sir Henry Clinton's Papers in the William L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, MI from vols. 34, 90, 132, 136, on microfilm, USMA Library, West Point, NY.

<sup>53</sup>Clinton, American Rebellion, 124.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 126-27.

justified the huge quantities of resources and manpower on the part of both military establishments. Military geography had given to generals on both sides strategic and operational opportunities based simply on the size and location of the Hudson. Because of its location the Hudson became a political and economic barrier between the New England states and those to its south. Whoever controlled the Hudson controlled its usage as a watery highway and exploited its value for communications and commerce. As a nexus of population, industry, and agriculture, the river affected the logistics of both the British and the American armies. Recognizing the Hudson's value, by their actions and the troops, ships, boats, and other resources that they invested in fortifying or attacking, the commanders in chief had converted rhetoric into reality: the "line of the Hudson" truly became for them the "key of America" and the "seat of the war."

Relying on the military strategy of a war of posts, the British would take the initiative in the fall of 1777, and with Howe distracting Washington with the Continental Army--to put the best face on his scheme--to protect the American capital of Philadelphia, General Burgoyne would try to seize the "line of the Hudson" with an army from Canada so that the British could use the advantages that it seemed to offer. Awkwardly and disastrously on the defensive in 1777, the American army in the summer of 1781, revitalized by the

presence of Rochambeau's French soldiers and the promise of de Grasse's fleet, would pursue a similar military strategy in order to turn the tables on Clinton's forces in New York City. The capture of that city offered the chance not only to open the Hudson fully but to end the war by attacking the British war at their "seat of the war." The doctrine and practices of joint and combined warfare in place in the armies would help to influence the outcome of these two vital campaigns.



## CHAPTER 2

### CONJUNCT OR JOINT OPERATIONS: "ONE MIND"

Soldiers and sailors of Great Britain and her American colonies began their war in 1775 with an understanding of military, naval, and, for some, even joint affairs; the same was true of the military leaders of France in 1778. They conducted their campaigns and battles using doctrine, tactics, techniques, and procedures that were as much a part of their respective crafts as these elements of the military art were for each succeeding year group of officers of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Warsaw Pact who confronted each other over the course of the Cold War. How did General William Vaughan's soldiers and Commodore Hotham's sailors know what to do as, with very short notice, they loaded the ships, transports, and ultimately the flat-bottomed boats for a joint attack on the forts of the Hudson Highlands in October 1777? How did the allied soldiers and sailors of Generals George Washington and Rochambeau and Admiral de Grasse perform so well when they cooperated against the trapped army of Lieutenant General Charles, Lord Cornwallis? In each of these cases, the military men did what they did

because of their heritage, their experience or at least the experience of their leaders, the practices that those officers and noncommissioned officers passed on to their subordinates, and their understanding of the procedures relevant to a particular military operation laid out in orders, instructions, or manuals. In short, although they did not yet use the term, they followed the well-developed--by October 1777--amalgamation of these elements, doctrine--the accepted body of ideas or practices--relevant to their respective military tasks or operations.<sup>1</sup> The pervasive presence of this doctrine gave individual commanders the ability to execute joint operations even if they lacked personal experience themselves. Doctrine thus served as a proxy for experience in joint operations.

As an island between the English Channel and the Atlantic Ocean, England, in the words of Alfred Thayer Mahan, was "drawn to the sea" because it had "received from Nature but little, and, until her manufactures were developed, had little to export." This condition, "Their many wants, combined with their restless activity and other conditions that favored maritime enterprise, led her people abroad." Mahan found this link between England and the sea so compelling that he focused

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<sup>1</sup>Since the Middle Ages, people have understood doctrine to mean "That which is taught or laid down as true concerning a particular subject or department of knowledge, as religion, politics, science, etc.," Oxford English Dictionary (1971), s.v. "Doctrine"; as the military became more professional, it appropriated the term, Major John I. Alger, Definitions and Doctrine of the Military Art (West Point: Department of History, 1979), 8.

on it in his seminal work, The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783. His analysis led him to conclude that, during the period under study, England had "reached the greatest height of sea power of any modern nation. . . ." <sup>2</sup> Sir Julian Corbett argued that this sea power had produced "a paradox": it had allowed England--"a small country with a weak army"--to expand and "gather to herself the most desirable regions of the earth and to gather them at the expense of the greatest military Powers."<sup>3</sup> One of these powers was, of course, France, and although it was not an island, it would develop fleets that would extend its reach for empire throughout the world.

For hundreds of years, these two imperial nations would threaten each other and vie for command of the seas and the territories that lay beyond their distant shores. Fleet actions at sea would so dominate this competition that Mahan would focus on "the enemy's ships and fleets" as "the true objects to be assailed on all occasions."<sup>4</sup> In a similar vein, England's armies would be drawn to face those of France. This primary service orientation had to be overcome for Englishmen to realize their imperial dreams.

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<sup>2</sup>A. T. Mahan, The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783, 12th ed. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1890), 36-37, 59.

<sup>3</sup>Julian S. Corbett, Some Principles of Maritime Strategy (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1911), 55-56.

<sup>4</sup>Mahan, 288.

Despite the inevitable orientation of admirals on the fleets of opposing navies and of generals on the armies of the Continental powers, England was a seafaring nation with colonial aspirations. Numbers of her sailors and soldiers had, therefore, found it necessary to work together to fulfill their country's imperial destiny. From this cooperation between armies and fleets came conjunct or joint operations involving elements of both.<sup>5</sup> Expeditions leaving the island or invading forces attempting to land on it had had no other choice but to make the journey aboard ship; the English Channel and the Atlantic Ocean left no alternative. From the Romans to the Normans to the Vikings to the Dutch, soldiers had stepped ashore in England from boats or ships. Likewise, King Henry V, Sir Francis Drake, and Marlborough had launched their quests for territory, booty, and glory from the seaports of England. Thomas M. Molyneux's first seven chapters of Conjunct Expeditions chronicle what he felt had been done for "almost eighteen centuries by these Conjunct Armaments" since the time of Julius Caesar.<sup>6</sup> In the opening years of the American Revolution, the British government reinforced this long-standing tradition by dictating that the Royal Navy assist the army as its top priority.<sup>7</sup> Geography, the

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<sup>5</sup>Molyneux.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, Pt. 2, 1.

<sup>7</sup>Daniel A. Baugh, "Why did Britain lose command of the sea during the war for America?" in Jeremy Black and Philip Woodfine, eds., The British Navy and the Use of Naval Power in the Eighteenth Century (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1988), 155.

interests of the people of England, and governmental policy had given the officers of the army and navy in England a heritage of operating together that they would take with them into the War of Independence.

While a heritage of conducting joint operations passed from generation to generation of English officers, each cohort of officers had had to acquire its own personal experience with the concept and the methodology for implementing it. Not all naval officers would have or would seek the opportunity to join their army counterparts in combat. For Army officers there was little choice; except for those involved in home defense in England, war generally meant that they would travel to distant theaters aboard His Majesty's ships and contracted transports. Lack of experience by either or both component commanders in a joint operation could have disastrous consequences as events unfolded.

For the officers chosen to crush the rebellion in the American colonies, tradition was a condition that helped to shape the unique experiences that each brought to war in the New World. Some had braved the 3,000-mile journey over the stormy Atlantic learning at first hand the art and science of transporting soldiers aboard ship; a few had even gone the final step and landed with them upon hostile shores in Cartagena (Columbia) the West Indies, Louisbourg, or Quebec in the War of Jenkins' Ear, King George's War, or the French and

Indian War. From 1754-1763 Sir Thomas Gage, for example, served in land operations in Virginia, New York, and Canada, rising from regimental commander to commander in chief of British forces in North America. He had broadened his joint experience, however, in the Earl of Loudoun's "abortive" expedition against Louisbourg, Cape Breton Island, in 1757.<sup>8</sup> He would use this experience in June 1775 as he exercised overall command in the landings against Breed's (Bunker) Hill, an operation in which Sir William Howe was the tactical commander.

In contrast with Gage, Howe had participated in a number of successful joint, amphibious operations upon which he drew as he directed similar campaigns against New York in 1776 and Philadelphia in 1777. He commanded the 58th Foot in the successful siege of Louisbourg by Sir Jeffrey Amherst in July 1758; led the forlorn hope of light infantrymen at Quebec under Sir James Wolfe in September 1759; commanded a brigade in the siege of the fortress at Belle Ile on the coast of France in 1761; and served as adjutant general during the successful siege of Havana, Cuba, in 1762.<sup>9</sup> Howe had another advantage in terms of education about cooperative operations with the navy: his brother was a naval officer. While "Black Dick" had had no previous experience in the

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<sup>8</sup>Trevor N. Dupuy, Curt Johnson, and David L. Bongard, The Harper Encyclopedia of Military Biography (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), s.v. "Gage, Thomas."

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, s.v. "Howe, Sir William, 2d Earl."

American colonies and had served in the Atlantic only in fleet operations in the Seven Years' War, he successfully supported his brother's two major joint operations of 1776 and 1777.<sup>10</sup> That relationship and Sir William's experience helped to bridge the gap in his brother's professional background.

Of the other key naval commanders of the American Revolution, only one, Sir George Brydges Rodney, had substantial experience with joint operations in earlier wars. This meant that most naval commanders would have to learn as they went in the course of the American Revolution or profit from the study or the experiences of others. Rodney missed the operation against Louisbourg in 1758 because of illness but, as commander in chief of the Leeward Island station in 1762, he led a major, joint expedition that captured Martinique, St. Lucia, Grenada, and St. Vincent; he would return to the West Indies in 1780.<sup>11</sup> Although Admiral Sir Thomas Graves had served aboard his father's ship, H.M.S. Norfolk, in the disastrous attack on Cartagena in 1741, he had no apparent joint duty thereafter, posted to the home station and the French coast in frigates for most of the Seven Years' War; he would see action in North America in H.M.S. Antelope (50 guns) off Newfoundland against future adversary, the Chevalier de Ternay, while escorting a convoy in 1762. The loser to Count de Grasse in the Battle of the Virginia Capes

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., s.v. "Howe, Richard Earl."

<sup>11</sup>DNB, s.v. "Rodney, George Brydges."

in 1781, he would strand Cornwallis at Yorktown because "he had neither the genius to redress the balance, nor the confidence to depart from the formal order of the fighting instructions with the risk of being shot if he failed."<sup>12</sup>

Graves's predecessor as commander in chief of the American station, Rear Admiral Marriot Arbuthnot had seen no service in North America nor joint duty until he "grudgingly cooperated" with Clinton in the operation against Charleston in 1779-80.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, their operation their was a success. Admiral Samuel Hood's fleet experience commanding sloops and frigates on the North American station, in the Mediterranean, and in the Channel in the Seven Years' War prepared him no better than Arbuthnot for the challenges of high command that he would face in the Revolution despite his personal bravery and tactical skill. He would share responsibility with Graves for abandoning Cornwallis at Yorktown.<sup>14</sup> One is left to speculate whether Graves or Hood would have been more aggressive in helping Cornwallis if either had had some previous substantive joint rather than only fleet duty, which would have exposed them to the capabilities and limitations of a land force. As the British would demonstrate early in the American Revolution, joint

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., s.v. "Graves, Thomas, Baron Graves"; Dupuy, s.v. "Graves, Thomas, 1st Baron."

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., s.v. "Arbuthnot, Marriot [Arbuthnutt]."

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., s.v. "Hood, Samuel, 1st Viscount."



doctrine allowed even inexperienced commanders to transcend their own lack of joint experience.

More junior officers had fewer opportunities than their seniors in the Seven Years' War for both combat and joint expeditions. Sir William Hotham, who would lead the naval forces in the Highlands in 1777, commanded sloops and frigates against the French in North America, the West Indies, and the North Sea. He would prove adept in independent operations in the guerre de course against French merchantmen and privateers. He would be initiated into joint operations in the Howes' campaign against New York in 1776 under the tutelage of none other than Sir Henry Clinton. Commodore Hotham's management of the landing boats and naval gunfire from his frigates conformed to Clinton's orders and helped his soldiers land unopposed in Kip's Bay.<sup>15</sup> Sir James Wallace, detailed from his captaincy of the H.M.S. Experiment (50) to command Hotham's advance body up the Hudson in 1777, had taken part in the joint, amphibious reduction of Guadeloupe in January 1759. After service in the Mediterranean and promotion to commander, he would take over the sloop, Trial, and would finish out the war on the North American station. He would command H.M.S. Rose (20) under Sir Richard in the New York campaign of 1776.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Clinton, American Rebellion, 45-46; DNB, s. v. "Hotham, William, first Baron Hotham."

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, s.v. "Wallace, Sir James"; journal of H.M.S. Rose, 14 Sep. 1776, Naval Documents, 6: 840.

Sir George Collier, who would command the naval forces that supported Sir Henry's forces when they seized Stony Point in May 1779, had seen service on home station and in the East Indies until he commanded a frigate for the last year of the war with France. By 1779 he had risen in rank to commodore and, as the temporary commander of the North American station, had proposed, and Sir Henry accepted, a plan for a successful, joint raid of the Chesapeake with some 2,000 troops under the command of Brigadier General Edward Mathew.<sup>17</sup> Clinton was effusive in his praise of Collier; he wrote, upon learning that Arbothnot would relieve him, that "as I had constantly experienced the most hearty assistance from [him] whenever we acted together, I had naturally the greatest confidence of his willingness and zeal to forward the public service; and, being from thence persuaded that our part of the naval business would have been properly conducted under *him*, I could not but eye his removal with regret."<sup>18</sup> According to his editor, this was high praise indeed from Sir Henry as "This was one of the rare moments during Clinton's command when he was on cordial terms with the navy."<sup>19</sup> Collier reciprocated in a letter to Lord Germain:

'Your Lordship will permit me to express my entire satisfaction and pleasure in serving with this gentleman. One mind has animated us on every occasion where our royal master's service could be promoted. We are neither

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<sup>17</sup>DNB, s.v. "Collier, Sir George."

<sup>18</sup>Clinton, American Rebellion, 141.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 141n.

of us land or sea officers, but both. I strip my ships bare of men, even to leave scarce a boat's crew, for the purpose of dragging cannon, moving troops, horses, etc. The General frequently lends us small detachments which enable ships to go to sea that otherwise, for want of men could not; and every other act of kindness to the navy he is always ready to perform.'<sup>20</sup>

These words could be the anthem for present-day jointness and reflect an attitude of cooperation that is of paramount importance in joint operations.

Sir John Vaughan represented the Army involvement in joint operations below the level of commanders in chief. In the French and Indian War, Major General Robert Monckton mentioned Vaughan in his dispatch of 9 February 1762 for his actions as commander of a division of grenadiers in the taking of Martinique. In the American Revolution, Colonel Vaughan, with the local rank of brigadier general, would gain valuable experience as the tactical commander of the troops assembled under Sir Henry's command to capture Charleston in June 1776. As a major general, he led the grenadiers at the battle of Long Island. He would be the ground-force commander under Clinton in both joint attacks against the fortifications in the Highlands, serving with Hotham and Collier respectively.<sup>21</sup> Collier's sense of "oneness" was an accolade that could be applied not only to Clinton and himself, but Hotham and Vaughan as well.

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<sup>20</sup>Collier to Germain, 15 June 1779, Germain Papers, quoted in *ibid*.

<sup>21</sup>DNE, s.v. "Vaughan, Sir John."

While not every British officer who served in North America had had practical experience with conjunct operations there, as a subaltern, Sir Henry Clinton, for example, had had to feel the gentle swaying of a deck beneath his feet as he made his way with his soldiers to fight the forces of France on the Continent in the Seven Years' War. The son of an admiral and royal governor of New York, Clinton learned early about North America and life aboard ship since he had spent six of his first nineteen years of his life in the colonies. Although as a young captain he had served in the garrison of Louisbourg, he had made his reputation for gallantry in Germany, serving as an aide-de-camp for Charles, the Prince of Brunswick, with whom he was wounded at the battle of Friedberg.<sup>22</sup>

Clinton's first major amphibious operation of the Revolution at Charleston with Commodore Sir Peter Parker in June 1776 was a disastrous lesson in how not to conduct a joint campaign. His biographer concluded that, "while the government had assigned him a vague and difficult task" and Parker's choice of Sullivan's Island as the primary objective and his uncoordinated attack were major factors in the defeat, "Clinton's generalship was at its worst." He conceded the initiative to Parker, lost his "sense of urgency," failed to design a solid plan, and landed his troops on a nearby island

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<sup>22</sup>William B. Willcox, Portrait of a General: Sir Henry Clinton in the War of Independence (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962, 1964), 5, 9, 17-18.

from which they could make no contribution to the main attack.<sup>23</sup> The principal commanders would learn from this debacle, as Parker and Clinton would participate in the New York campaign and would successfully collaborate in the capturing of Newport, Rhode Island, in December 1776. In fact, Clinton would personally amass an unbroken string of joint victories from Newport on: Hudson Highlands (1777), Stony Point (1779), and Charleston (1780). Upon such successes British fortunes in the war turned as littoral expeditions offered them a primary advantage over the Americans, particularly when they were fighting alone. Fortunately for the British, there was enough experience with joint operations among the more senior officers of the army and navy to make something operationally and tactically of the advantage that they possessed.

Future American commanders had had fewer opportunities to participate in joint operations before the Revolution, but American colonists had joined their English peers in expeditions against their Spanish and French foes in the Caribbean and the upper reaches of North America in the previous wars. Major General--then Ranger Major--Israel Putnam had been in Sir James Abercromby's flotilla of one thousand vessels that had transported fifteen thousand troops for the unsuccessful attack on Fort Ticonderoga from Lake

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<sup>23</sup>Clinton, American Rebellion, xx-xxi.

George and, as a lieutenant colonel, had served with General Jeffrey Amherst in the capturing of Montreal in 1760.

Although ship-wrecked, Colonel Putnam led the 1st Connecticut in the expedition of over twelve thousand British regulars and provincial soldiers in a fleet of about 200 ships against Havana in 1762.<sup>24</sup> While Major General Benjamin Lincoln and Brigadier Generals George and James Clinton, like many of their contemporaries, had served in the militia during the French and Indian War, they did not participate in any major joint operation. Gruber found that fourteen of twenty-one American generals had been in combat before facing the British at New York in 1776; unfortunately, few of these had been a part of actions with the navy.<sup>25</sup>

Some Americans in the lower ranks, if they were young enough at the time, may have participated in joint operations; opportunities had existed. The American Regiment of some 3,000 men made up over 48 percent of Lord Cathcart's expedition to the West Indies in 1740; sadly, 65 percent of these men would become casualties, mostly to tropical diseases.<sup>26</sup> Colonial soldiers from Georgia and South Carolina would be a part of Sir James Oglethorpe's 2,000-man, failed,

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<sup>24</sup>Dupuy, s.v. "Putnam, Israel"; John Niven, Connecticut Hero: Israel Putnam (Hartford, CT: The American Revolution Bicentennial Commission of Connecticut, 1977), 30-31, 35-36.

<sup>25</sup>Mark Mayo Boatner III, Encyclopedia of the American Revolution (New York: David McKay Company, 1966, 1974), s.v. "Clinton, George," "Clinton, James," and "Lincoln, Benjamin"; Gruber, "Long Island," 2-3.

<sup>26</sup>Harding, 70, 203.

joint expedition against St. Augustine in 1740.<sup>27</sup> On the positive side, one thousand men, including Putnam, from Connecticut, six companies from New York, three companies from New Jersey, and three from Rhode Island bolstered the Earl of Albemarle's triumphant, joint expedition against Havana in 1762.<sup>28</sup> Sir William Pepperell of Maine led a provincial force of over three thousand men from his region, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Connecticut, supported by ships of the Royal Navy under Commodore Peter Warren and two New England warships, to take Louisbourg on 17 June 1745.<sup>29</sup> Americans thus had shared the British heritage for joint operations, and some have had the opportunity to apply that experience against them later.

Once France joined the alliance against Great Britain, Americans learned from their French counterparts, whose experiences through the long English-French rivalry paralleled those of their British antagonists. Rochambeau had fought throughout Europe in the Seven Years' War and had "distinguished himself" in the joint campaign against the British at Port Mahon, Minorca, in 1756.<sup>30</sup> Although their opponents captured Counts d'Estaing and de Grasse in their respective pre-Revolutionary wars, both gained extensive joint

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<sup>27</sup>James P. Herson, "In Defense of the Navy: The Royal Navy in the St. Augustine Expedition of 1740" (West Point, NY: 1994), 10n, submitted to The Mariner's Mirror for publication.

<sup>28</sup>Niven, 35-36.

<sup>29</sup>Douglas Edward Leach, Arms for Empire: A Military History of the British Colonies in North America, 1607-1763 (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1973), 227-239.

<sup>30</sup>Boatner, s.v. "Rochambeau, Jean Baptiste, Donatien de Vimeur, Comte de."

experience in the Windward Islands and West Indies; in fact, de Grasse was d'Estaing's subordinate when he captured Grenada in 1779.<sup>31</sup> Admiral de Ternay had been at Louisbourg when it fell to Amherst in 1758, had commanded a division of gunboats on the St. Lawrence, and had led two frigates in a raid against St. John, New Brunswick, in 1762.<sup>32</sup> Upon this varied experience would the Americans have to depend in the climactic years of the war. Individual insights from positive and negative aspects of past joint operations would lead to practices and even to written instructions and published manuals that would become doctrine in the execution of such future operations by the other adversaries as well.

The practices that made joint operations work in the Seven Years' War and in the early campaigns of the War of Independence found their way first into the instructions and orders of commanders and then into published manuals, which officers could buy or share. J. Millan published as Instructions to Young Officers General James Wolfe's detailed orders covering every aspect of amphibious operations from loads for individual soldiers to signals to distribution of his flat-boats for his forces involved in the attack at Louisbourg and Quebec in 1759.<sup>33</sup> Rodney incorporated his

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<sup>31</sup>Dupuy, s.v. "Estaing, Count Charles Hector Theodat d'" and "Grasse, Count François Joseph Paul de."

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., s.v. "Ternay, Charles Louis d'Arsac, Chevalier de."

<sup>33</sup>James Wolfe, General Wolfe's Instructions to Young Officers, 2d ed. (London: J. Millan, 1780; reprint, Ottawa: Museum Restoration Service, 1967).



signals into "Landing Instructions" (1762) and "Signals" (1782).<sup>34</sup> Authors addressed the subject of joint operations in books published for wider distribution. For example, John MacIntire wrote a book, A Military Treatise on the Discipline of the Marine Forces, when at sea; together with Short Instructions for Detachments sent to attack on Shore.<sup>35</sup> And, of course, Molyneux wrote his polemic in 1759 advocating a return to a more skillful use of conjunct operations, reacting to the disastrous Rochefort operation two years earlier.

Lacking the personal experience in military affairs in general and in joint operations in particular, Americans had to draw upon the British heritage that they shared and the manuals available to them. John H. Stanley outlines in his master's thesis the manuals that were available in America for the literate to read. He found that key leaders from Washington to Nathanael Greene to Henry Knox to Timothy Pickering depended on study of the military art to add to their understanding of their new craft.<sup>36</sup> One of the books available to them as of 1768 was Wolfe's Instructions, although it is not possible to prove who actually read it. What they could not glean from such manuals would have to come

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<sup>34</sup>Lord George Rodney, Letter-Books and Order-Book, 1780-1782, Publications of the Naval History Society, 2 vols. (New York: New York Historical Society for the Naval History Society, 1932), 562-567 and Julian S. Corbett, ed., Signals and Instructions, 1776-1794. (London: Conway Maritime Press, 1905; reprint, United States Naval Institute, 1971), 355-363.

<sup>35</sup>Cited in Syrett, 278n. Only one copy appears to exist in the U.S. , and it is in the Library of Congress.

<sup>36</sup>John Henry Stanley, "Preliminary Investigation of Military Manuals of American Imprint Prior to 1800" (M.A. thesis, Brown University, 1964), 4-6, 7.

from their own experiences as they felt their way through the fog and uncertainty of their own war.

By the beginning of the American Revolution the doctrine for conjunct expeditions had evolved through the individual national experiences of the wars of the 1740s, 1750s, and 1760s and was a resource upon which British, Americans, and French officers would draw from almost the very start of their involvement. Since Washington wished to make the Continental Army in the image of the British Army, British doctrine would be the dominant influence on the Americans as they prepared to defend against their mentors in October 1777. By 1781 Americans would have been exposed to French practices, since d'Estaing and Major General John Sullivan had cooperated, unsuccessfully, against the British in Newport in the summer of 1778, and, with American soldiers in his force, d'Estaing had failed as dismally at Savannah, Georgia, in September and October 1779. Different French and American commanders in different situations would finally produce successes. Because doctrine was in place, commanders would be able execute joint operations in a prescribed way as military situations offered opportunities.

Although Washington's planned siege of New York City and his triumphant siege with Rochambeau of Yorktown depended on French warships primarily to establish sea control, amphibious landings were the typical joint operations of the eighteenth

century in general and the American Revolution in particular. The word, amphibious, was first associated with animals that lived on land and in the water; however, as early as 1654 soldiers and sailors adapted the term to military operations: "The Admiral . . . being scanted in Mariners . . . was enforced to take in two thousand two hundred land men, who should be *amphibious*, serving partly for sea-men, and partly for land-souldiers."<sup>37</sup> Molyneux used this "amphibious kind of Warfare" to describe conjunct expeditions--"Expeditions carried on jointly by the Fleet and Army"--as well as "Littoral War"--"where our Fleet and Army act together," in his Conjunct Expeditions in 1759. Molyneux, for example, identified in his book some seventy conjunct expeditions that had involved England, placing present-day doctrinal terms on a solid foundation of usage.<sup>38</sup> From these, the British operation against the Spanish at Cartagena and their operations against the French in North America during the Seven Years' War served to illustrate the evolving British doctrine for joint amphibious operations.

Amphibious operations, even when done only as raids, fit well within a military strategy of a war of posts since the objectives--posts--were generally key seaports on settled islands or on the enemy's coast. Ministers and senior officers had to decide the theater of operations to be given

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<sup>37</sup>OED, s.v. "Amphibious."

<sup>38</sup>Molyneux, ii, vi, 2-3.

priority and choose the correct posts to attack to make the strategy fulfill the political ends for which the war was being fought. As the Admiralty and the ministry of Sir Robert Walpole planned an expedition against the Spanish in the Caribbean from 1738 to 1740, they zeroed in on Havana as "the key to all America'" because of its harbor and its position astride the Florida Channel, "the main artery of Caribbean trade" and Cartagena, "the fortified port of the *Galleons*," the start point for the convoys of Peruvian bullion. Walpole and King George II rejected Havana and chose Cartagena thinking that the latter could be taken with less manpower, 3,000 soldiers vice 8-10,000 needed for a landward attack in Cuba.<sup>39</sup>

Once the political leaders and commanders in chief had picked the objectives, they had to allocate the manpower and resources, such as fleets, transports, and logistics required to accomplish the objectives. In the case of Cartagena, Walpole, the Admiralty, and the War Office put together an "expeditionary army" that peaked at 8,676 regulars and provincials in the American Regiment, of which the British were transported in seventy-four contracted vessels. Vice Admiral Edward Vernon supported this army with a fleet of thirty-three ships of the line and other auxiliaries.<sup>40</sup> After assessing New York City's primary value and potential cost,

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<sup>39</sup>Harding, 31, 32, 35

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 51, 86-87, 205.

Dartmouth, Gage, the Howes, Clinton, and Washington never wavered in their choice of it as a key objective for their respective strategies. For the attack there in 1776, the British government would allow the Howes a force of some 32,000 soldiers--from a total establishment of 45,130--30 warships manned by about 10,000 sailors, and nearly 400 transports--"the biggest, and most expensive, expedition Britain had ever sent overseas."<sup>41</sup>

This prioritization of objectives and resources at the strategic level bled over into the operational, or campaign, level of war by establishing the amount and nature of the relative combat power necessary for the primary joint operation to succeed. Walpole had rejected as too costly an attack on pivotal Havana with its suspected garrison of 1,300 Spanish regulars and 5,000 militia since he and his advisers had estimated that only a landward assault, requiring 8-10,000 soldiers was possible. He settled for Cartagena, figuring that a force of 3,000 (he sent more than 6,000) could take its fortifications, manned, as it turned out, by over 1,800 fit Spanish regulars and between 500 and 1,000 militiamen.<sup>42</sup> In 1776 Howe's 15,000 men from his 23-24,000 effectives landed on Long Island to face Sullivan's 7,000 Americans out of Washington's force of 11,000, odds of better than two to 1 in

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<sup>41</sup>Gruber, "Long Island," 20; Philip R. N. Katcher, Encyclopedia of British, Provincial and German Army Units, 1775-1783 (Harrisburg: Stackpole Books, 1973), 141; James L. Stokesbury, A Short History of the American Revolution (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1991), 92.

<sup>42</sup>Harding, 35.

a quantitative sense and much, much better in terms of the qualitative intangibles of combat power provided by well-trained and disciplined regulars backed by a formidable fleet.<sup>43</sup>

Maritime control, as a minimum, and naval supremacy, if possible, completed, at the strategic and operational level, the equation of joint combat power provided by adequate land and naval forces. Vernon enjoyed complete naval dominance in the Caribbean with the fifty-two warships of his squadron.<sup>44</sup> Unfortunately, he and Wentworth could not convert this major advantage into victory as they could not decide the issue ashore. Richard Harding argued that, later, "The great conquests of the Seven Years War were made under the protection of overwhelming maritime superiority in West Indian waters."<sup>45</sup> In almost every case in the American Revolution the Royal Navy was able to facilitate conjunct operations with at least local sea control; in fact, until 1778, the British exercised almost complete naval supremacy. The initial landings of the New York campaign showed the positive results of such naval dominance, and the Yorktown campaign demonstrated that defeat could follow its loss. Harding concluded that the "mixed results of the American War of

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<sup>43</sup>Gruber, "Long Island," 18, 20, 96.

<sup>44</sup>Harding, 150-51, 171.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 151.

Independence were caused at least in part, by Britain's inability to maintain maritime control."<sup>46</sup>

Since policy makers chose the commanders for major expeditions or commanders in chief for theaters, their collaborative political and strategic decisions affected the outcome of the campaigns because of the chemistry produced by individual personalities and levels of experience. In addition, from Cartagena to Charleston in 1776 unity of command had proven key to sorting out the conflicting authority of the army and naval component commanders once they arrived in their areas of operation. William Willcox explained the problem that service orientation made for cooperation between the army and the navy, particularly when command authority is divided:

The ranking naval officer has had a different training than that of his army colleague, and is consequently unlike him in the bent of his tactical and even strategic thinking, in his service loyalties, and in the superiors upon whose favor he depends and whose prejudices he must respect. No matter how agreeable two such commanders may be, their professional background and position fix a gulf between them. To give them equal authority, and expect them to cooperate like the right and left hand, is to expect a continuous miracle.<sup>47</sup>

Harding identified the choice of commanders and the authority given to them as one of the major stumbling blocks to success in the West Indies from 1740 to 1742. King George II rejected the Earl of Stair, the third ranking lieutenant

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Clinton, American Rebellion, xxii.

general, to lead the expedition because of his active involvement in the political opposition, appointing instead a loyal, junior major general, Lord Cathcart, with a "creditable military record" from the War of Spanish Succession. When Cathcart died of disease on 20 December 1740, soon after his force arrived in Dominica, leadership would devolve upon Brigadier General Thomas Wentworth, a capable administrator with no major command or combat experience.

For the navy, Admiral Vernon was the commander of the Jamaica station and thus the naval component commander because he had actively sought the position, and the first choices for that post had refused to go.<sup>48</sup> Vernon would exploit Wentworth's inexperience and take de facto control of the expedition although formal instructions had given each commander equal authority. While this unofficially provided for unity of command in the face of initially bad guidance, Vernon, feeling that fleet operations alone would carry the day, relegated the army's role to "secondary and temporary." In Harding's judgment Vernon had thereby undermined a key ingredient of successful joint operations--"mutual dependence," believing that "the army served the needs of the fleet and never vice-versa." In positive terms this meant that "Success was usually based upon the possession of resources which ensured the security of the fleet or the army,

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 42-47.



and enabled the commanders to look beyond their immediate service obligations to the broader objective of an amphibious attack." Harding concluded that the negative factors combined with serious errors of judgment by both commanders and "eventually overwhelmed the expedition."<sup>49</sup>

While ambition and party and organizational politics would always influence the choice of individual commanders, historian David Syrett, in his study of amphibious operations in the eighteenth century, concluded that, after the failure of the expedition against Rochefort, France, in 1757, the British solved the issue of command. For the remainder of the Seven Years' War, once both commanders had agreed on the landing site, the naval commander would exercise authority until the troops got ashore, at which point, the army would assume control.<sup>50</sup> For example, at Quebec, Vice Admiral Sir Charles Saunders reported "that during this tedious campaign, there has continued a perfect good understanding between the army and the Navy."<sup>51</sup> A new cohort of commanders would have to relearn this hard-gained truth as Parker and Clinton demonstrated at Charleston in 1776. The Howe brothers sorted out their respective roles at New York as did Parker and Clinton when given a second chance at Newport. Even after

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 90, 198.

<sup>50</sup>Syrett, "Methodology," 271-72.

<sup>51</sup>Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Saunders to John Cleveland, Secretary of the Admiralty, 21 Sept. 1759, John B. Hattendorf, R. J. B. Knight, A. W. H. Pearsall, N. A. M. Rodger, and Geoffrey Till, British Naval Documents, 1204-1960, Navy Records Society, Vol. 131 (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1993), 393.

achieving such notable victories in cooperation with competent counterparts in the Royal Navy, two of the best general officers in the British army, Howe and Clinton, would be unable or unwilling to destroy Washington's army and end the war.<sup>52</sup> Excellent officers and clear lines of authority only help to create a situation in which victory becomes possible.

Once joint commanders had the proper forces and authority, they could devise their plan for the campaign and then the tactics for the landings that they intended to conduct. Intelligence of the enemy's order of battle, fortifications, and landing sites constituted the first input. The lack of intelligence available to Vernon and Wentworth severely handicapped them in the campaign to the West Indies , nor were they aggressive in carrying out a timely, thorough reconnaissance to fill the void. Driven to speed because of the devastating effects of disease and a poor understanding of the state of the defenses of Cartagena, Vernon pushed Wentworth to execute a plan and to use a landing site that were based on an account of the Baron Jean Bernard Louis Desjeans Pontis, who had captured the city in 1697, rather than on recent reconnaissances.<sup>53</sup>

Commodore Peter Warren and his officers, by contrast, developed a list of questions for which Warren needed answers as he and General Pepperell prepared their assault on

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<sup>52</sup>Gruber, "Long Island," 3.

<sup>53</sup>Harding, 33-34

Louisbourg in 1745. He hoped to learn about the enemy force, their supplies, "What number of cannon, they can bring to play upon the ships from the town, if the Island Battery should be taken," and "How near can the ships come to the town battery."<sup>54</sup> In 1759 General James Wolfe used rangers to scout the landing site on the Isle of Orleans the night before he landed there.<sup>55</sup> While such planning led to success on Cape Breton Island, inadequate reconnaissance led to disaster for Clinton as he stranded his troops on an island from which they could not support Parker's naval attack on Sullivan's Island in 1776.

The commander's assessment of the information that he had been able to gather allowed him to consider deception and surprise as combat multipliers in both operations and tactics. Commodore Warren proposed a feint against the Island Battery at Louisbourg one to two hours before the main landing.<sup>56</sup> Wolfe used the cover of darkness and an unguarded path to gain the Plains of Abraham after having half his troops row about three miles in boats to the landing site.<sup>57</sup> Clinton would employ both deception and surprise to gain a landing at Kip's Bay in 1776 and at King's Ferry in 1777.

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<sup>54</sup>"A Proposed plan of attack by Commodore Peter Warren and his officers, enclosed in a letter to Lieutenant-General William Pepperell," 4 May 1745, Hattendorf, 377-378.

<sup>55</sup>Syrett, "Methodology," 271.

<sup>56</sup>Warren to Pepperell, 4 May 1745, Hattendorf, 376.

<sup>57</sup>Saunders to Cleveland, 21 Sept. 1759, *ibid.*, 392-93.

Techniques and procedures for communicating, escorting transports, landing troops from flat-bottomed boats, providing naval gunfire, and then supporting the forces once they were ashore dominated doctrine at the tactical levels.<sup>58</sup> Naval commanders used signal flags to communicate instructions to the landing parties aboard transports and flat-bottomed boats and to the supporting warships providing security and naval gunfire. At Louisbourg Warren planned to "hoist a red flag" when he "propose to go in and then later a Dutch flag."<sup>59</sup> By 1762 Admiral Rodney had developed more elaborate signals for use at Martinique. For example, "The rendezvous-ship for the Second Brigade is \_\_\_\_\_ which will hoist \_\_\_\_\_ under the flag at the fore top-gallant-mast head in the day, and in the night wear \_\_\_\_\_ at the fore topmast cross-trees one under another."<sup>60</sup> Twenty years later Rodney added more elaborate signals with distinguishing colors: "For the Companies of Landers of the Centre Division to prepare for Landing A White Flag with a Red Fly, at the Fore top gallant mast head with a Red Pendant under it, and One Gun."<sup>61</sup>

Signals were absolutely critical as naval officers loaded from forty to sixty troops from transports aboard each standard, flat-bottomed boat, when available, marshaled the boats of the respective waves offshore, and then guided them

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<sup>58</sup>For a succinct summary of details of these operations, see Syrett, "Methodology," 272-277.

<sup>59</sup>Warren to Pepperell, 4 May 1745, Hattendorf, 376-77.

<sup>60</sup>Corbett, Signals, 357.

<sup>61</sup>"Signals," 19 Feb. 1782, Rodney, 563.

ashore in echelon as close to battle order as possible. If the tactical situation warranted it, all of these movements were covered with naval gunfire from frigates and even ships of the line; fourteen ships did this critical chore in the landings at Havana in 1762. Five heavy frigates supported the British landings at Kip's Bay in 1776 from about fifty yards from the Patriot defenses.<sup>62</sup> Finally, once the ground commander had his forces ashore, the naval commander had to establish and maintain the supply lines between ship and shore. Admiral Saunders reported that at Quebec he was "beginning to send on shore the stores they [soldiers] will want, the provisions for 5,000 men, of which I can furnish them a sufficient quantity."<sup>63</sup> The sophisticated nature of the practices that Syrett highlighted in his article led him to conclude that "naval power and the ability to conduct amphibious operations conferred upon the British army during the last half of the eighteenth century a strategic importance and striking power far greater than the mere size of the force alone."<sup>64</sup>

While Molyneux was comfortable using the terms that jibe with current doctrinal language, none of the operational commanders in the Revolution or its the conflicts immediately preceding it incorporated them into their instructions or

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<sup>62</sup>Syrett, "Methodology," 272-276.

<sup>63</sup>Saunders to Cleveland, 21 Sep. 1759, Hattendorf, 392.

<sup>64</sup>Syrett, "Methodology," 277.

orders. So, while important, terminology is not nearly as critical as the understanding of the concepts that underlie the words popular at any given point in history. By the American Revolution the British had absorbed into their working doctrine, tactics, techniques, and procedures a sophisticated approach to joint operations in general and amphibious landings in particular. The starting point for this process for the officers of the Army and the Royal Navy called upon to execute joint campaigns in the American Revolution was an awareness that conjunct operations filled their heritage. Additionally, by personal experience or the experiences of their commanders, peers, or subordinates, they learned what was expected at each level of war to prosecute their campaigns and tactical landings. Finally, printers offered books that included instructions and ideas from experienced practitioners upon which the inexperienced could draw to expand their knowledge.

By October 1777, Clinton and Hotham had joint doctrine upon which they could rely in their campaign against the Hudson Highlands. For them and their comrades, successful joint operations were the products of a heritage of cooperation between the army and the navy resulting from the insular nature of the British state. Jointness started as political leaders and senior commanders began planning at the strategic levels by choosing appropriate objectives to fulfill

the political purposes of the war. Since these objectives were generally beyond the shores of England, commanders had to conduct joint operations to accomplish the tasks. In America the long coast almost dictated that the army would have to depend on the navy as it prosecuted its land campaigns; in return, the army delivered ports that the navy could use as bases and deny to the Patriots as part of their blockade.

Senior leaders apportioned joint forces so that expeditionary commanders had the relative combat power to undertake the military tasks at the operational and tactical levels. The personalities and experiences of the respective commanders had a decisive bearing on their outcome; enthusiastic cooperation between naval and land commanders with constant consultation proved to be of paramount importance to bridge the gap between the capabilities of their respective services. At the operational and tactical levels of war, intelligence, deception, surprise, communications, doctrine, and procedures made the difference between success and failure as they would in any military operation involving only a single service. In joint and combined operations, however, these components became even more significant because they required at least two services and, in the American case, two nations, to merge their respective capabilities into a single force under one overall commander against a series of

common objectives. Hotham and Clinton would draw all of these elements together on the Hudson River.

To make up for the lack of personal experience, the Americans had to rely upon the oral tradition for the insights of their cooperative expeditions with the British and the books available to them on a variety of military subjects from drill to littoral war. Once France entered the War for Independence, its commanders would lend their new allies guidance and support based upon their own extensive experience, in many cases gained against the British. Despite some disagreements at New York, by Yorktown, the Allies would be of "One mind" and would prove it by forcing Cornwallis to march his army to its surrender.



### CHAPTER 3

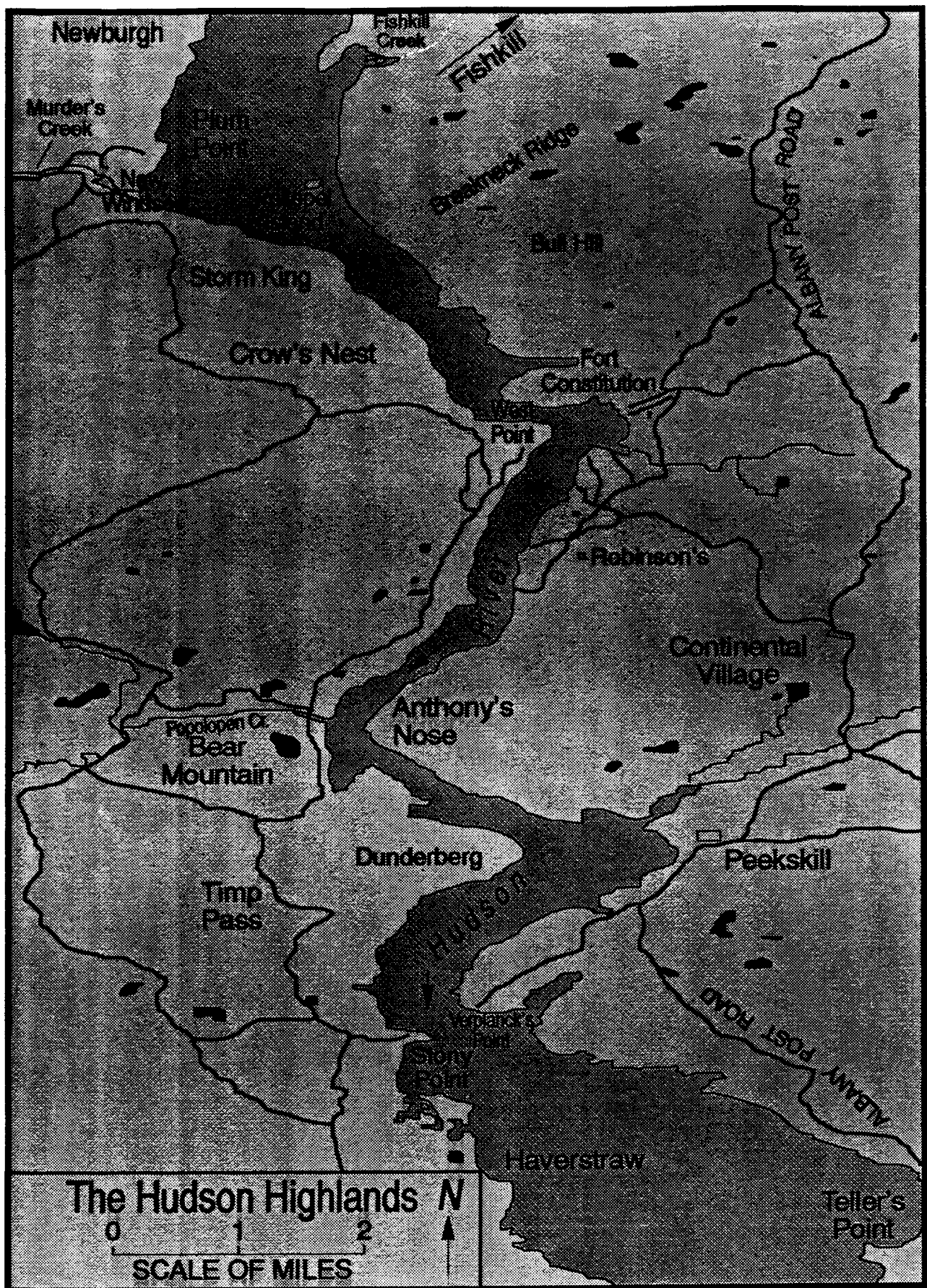
#### SIR HENRY'S HUDSON RIVER CAMPAIGN, 1777:

##### "CROUDING ALL SAIL TO SUPPORT US"

In October 1777 the British would use joint operations to facilitate their strategy on the Hudson and the Chesapeake. Since this strategy was uncoordinated, it had left Sir Henry Clinton, the commander of Crown forces in New York, with a dilemma: how best to protect his base on Manhattan Island and facilitate at the same time the operations of Sir William Howe with his army of fifteen thousand in Pennsylvania, General John Burgoyne's offensive from Canada with over seven thousand men, and temporary Brigadier General Barry St. Leger's diversion down the Mohawk Valley with some two thousand regulars, Indians, and provincials. Howe had given Clinton the discretion to act "offensively, in case the opportunity should offer."<sup>1</sup> Finally convinced of the grave situation faced by Burgoyne to his north, Clinton would take the "opportunity" that Sir William had offered and would conduct a joint, amphibious operation against the Patriot fortifications in the Hudson Highlands. While he would fail to spring

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<sup>1</sup>Title is from Lieutenant General Sir Henry Clinton to General Sir William Howe, 9 Oct. 1777, "Naval Documents," 10:99; Sir William Howe to Sir Henry Clinton, 9 July 1777, Narrative, 22.



"Gentleman Johnny" Burgoyne from his self-made trap at Saratoga, Sir Henry in his cooperative venture with Commodore William Hotham would capture his objectives in the Highlands and even destroy the capital of New York at Kingston. The key to these successes was the joint operation that they chose to execute, based on their own personal experience and well-developed joint doctrine.

Once Washington committed himself to shadowing the army of Howe, he left Major General Horatio Gates, commander of the Northern Department, to deal with Burgoyne and St. Leger and Major General Israel Putnam with fewer than one thousand Continentals and the militia of New York and Connecticut to face Clinton, for whom he proved no match. While the Americans shared a common military heritage with the British, and Putnam had even participated in earlier conjunct operations with them, the American joint response to Sir Henry's expedition revealed not only Putnam's limitations but the weakness of American naval resources and their inability to add a viable maritime dimension to joint operations at this stage of the war.

Sir Henry Clinton set the Hudson River Campaign of 1777 in motion on 2 October when he and Commodore William Hotham transported 3,000 men aboard some forty-seven ships and numerous flat-boats, landing first at Tarrytown 4 October, then Verplanck's Point on 5 October, and finally at Stony

Point on the 6th. By nightfall, following violent assaults on Forts Montgomery and Clinton after a twelve-hour march overland, Clinton occupied the twin forts on the Popolopen, opposed only by the small garrisons there under the command of the Clinton brothers, George and James. With Major General Israel Putnam remaining idle first at Peekskill and then at Fishkill, by 8 October Clinton was able to occupy Fort Independence, burn Independence Village, break the chain across the river, and occupy Fort Constitution on Martelaer's Rock to the north. After passing the chevaux-de-frise anchored on Pollepel's Island, Hotham's advance squadron under Captain Sir James Wallace would range the river unimpeded as far north as Poughkeepsie.

From 16-26 October Major General John Vaughan and Wallace would sail as far north as Livingston Manor in a vain attempt to link up with Burgoyne's ill-fated army. The highlight of this expedition would be an amphibious assault at Rondout Creek that culminated in Vaughan's burning of Esopus or Kingston, the capital of New York. George Clinton's forces would resist this attack to no avail; however, Putnam would finally mass enough forces on the west bank of the Hudson, cooperating with Brigadier Samuel H. Parson's 1,500 soldiers on the east to give Vaughan pause. The knowledge that Burgoyne had surrendered and orders from Clinton made up Vaughan's mind, and he and his force slipped back down the

river, abandoning the last of the recently captured forts renamed in his honor on 26 October. With no naval forces available, American soldiers could only harass the departing flotilla with cannon fire and musketry as it withdrew.

Clinton's Hudson River Campaign was at an end less than a month after it had begun. As events would have it, despite Clinton's series of tactical successes, the campaign that changed the complexion of the war had played out upriver at Saratoga. Burgoyne's surrender to General Gates gave France the opportunity to confront Great Britain in a world war. All of that was, however, in the future. In October 1777 why had Clinton's joint expedition against the Hudson Highlands and beyond been so successful? Why had George Clinton and Israel Putnam failed so badly as they attempted to counter Sir Henry's maneuvers with their joint forces?

At the strategic level, the Hudson River Campaign was a sideshow in 1777. Howe in Pennsylvania and Burgoyne advancing from Canada occupied the limelight in the British bid to end the war. After the fact, Howe would even argue that his campaign was designed to keep Washington's Main Army occupied while Burgoyne split the rebellion along the "line of the Hudson."<sup>2</sup> Clinton would have to take the forces that remained and do the best that he could to accomplish his primary

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 21.

mission of protecting New York City and to mount an expedition up the Hudson as well.

For a time General George Washington would dance between Clinton and Howe, unwilling to abandon the Hudson, yet determined to oppose any British move against the American capital of Philadelphia. Once Howe's intentions became clear by his landing at the Head of Elk, Maryland, in late August 1777, Washington reluctantly committed to Philadelphia. Putnam and George Clinton were on their own. The commander in chief expected them to defend the Hudson Highlands with the dregs of his paltry forces and the militia that he had importuned the governors of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut to provide.

For Clinton and Washington the Hudson would exert a powerful pull as a theater of operations. Even as General Washington contemplated the possible objectives, New England, Philadelphia, or even Charleston, of General Howe's army through August 1777, he never relaxed his concern for the Highlands or lost his clear conception of first Sir William's and then General Clinton's capabilities and possible intentions for that region. Washington wrote Putnam on 1 August that "The importance of preventing Mr. Howe's getting possession of the Highlands by a coup de main, is infinite to America, and in the present Situation of things, every effort

that can be thought of must be used."<sup>3</sup> From Chester, Pennsylvania, outside Philadelphia, he considered that Howe might be "practising a deep feint, merely to draw our attention and whole force to this point" and away from a move up the Hudson to "form a junction" with Burgoyne's army. This thought caused him to countermarch Major General John Sullivan's division toward Peekskill because at the time he still believed "the North River is their object and that they will make a rapid push to obtain possession of our posts there."<sup>4</sup>

Although Washington made Howe's army the "first object to defeat" once it had landed in Maryland, he ascribed to Clinton the ability to accomplish what he had earlier thought Howe planned: "to attack you [Putnam] below while Burgoyne comes down upon you." He was convinced that Clinton had both the forces and the resources to use "a sudden embarkation and a favourable Wind" to steal a march on Putnam. Unfortunately, with General Gates crying for reinforcements to stop Burgoyne and Howe threatening the American capital, even as Washington increased the intelligence effort directed against New York City and warned Putnam to be "vigilant," he stripped him of most of the Continentals upon which he could be expected to

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<sup>3</sup>General George Washington to Major General Israel Putnam, 1 August 1777, Fitzpatrick, Writings, 9: 1.

<sup>4</sup>Washington to Major General John Sullivan, 1 August 1777, Washington to John Augustine Washington, 5 August 1777, *ibid.*, 3, 20.

anchor his defenses.<sup>5</sup> Mounting a joint, defensive campaign, "Old Put" would have to rely upon the fortifications of the Highlands, a few ships, a handful of Continentals, and the militia of New York and Connecticut to oppose any move Clinton might choose to make.

On paper, General Putnam still had enough joint forces to give Sir Henry a fight and substantial fortifications well placed to make any expedition against them difficult. A committee of five Continental brigadier generals, including George Clinton, had offered its assessment of the requirements for a successful joint defense of the Highlands after viewing the fortifications there in May 1777. In their collective judgment, the addition of a boom and cables to bolster the chain and the presence of two armed galleys and the two New York frigates would combine with the batteries of the forts to "render it impossible for the Shipping to operate there." If the river remained blocked and if "the Passes into the Highlands be properly guarded, which can be done with about four or five thousand troops, the rest of the Army will be at liberty to operate elsewhere."<sup>6</sup> Thinking in joint terms, the generals had conceived a way to make the most of the Continentals' limited land and naval forces.

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<sup>5</sup>Washington to Putnam, 11, 13, and 22 Aug. and 14 and 23 Sep. 1777, *ibid.*, 55-56, 60, 115, 218-19, 254.

<sup>6</sup>"Continental Army Generals to General Washington," 17 May 1777, *Naval Documents*, 8: 987.



Except for the number of troops, Putnam would come close to meeting the generals' prescription. By his own returns, which Washington used to make his decisions, he had 2,608 men after the 1,500 soldiers and another 1,000 had been stripped out for Major General Alexander McDougall's expedition to New Jersey to counter a diversionary move by Clinton and then to Washington's Main Army. He, however, reported to Washington on 8 October that he had only 1,500 fit for duty at the time of the attack: 1,200 Continentals and 300 militiamen; he would revise this to 1,100 Continentals and 400 militiamen in his testimony before his Court of Inquiry in April 1778.<sup>7</sup> Militia companies would not report in large enough numbers to make up the difference between Putnam's actual force and the requirement that the generals had articulated in their report.

A key assumption of the generals' report would unhinge the whole scheme: "the Enemy will not attempt to operate [sic] by Land, the passes through the Highlands are so exceeding difficult."<sup>8</sup> Like James Wolfe at Quebec, Clinton found that the seemingly difficult proved the key to success; he either read the report or ignored the obstacles. Washington had read the report; he repeatedly reminded Putnam to "secure the passes into the Highlands . . ." for obstacles

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<sup>7</sup>Washington to Putnam, 14 Sep. 1777, *ibid.*, 218; Putnam to Washington, 8 Oct. 1777, "Naval Documents," 10: 72; "Genl. Putnam, N<sup>o</sup>. 25," "Report of the Court of Inquiry on the Loss of Fort Montgomery" to Washington, 5 April 1778, McDougall Papers, United States Military Philosophical Society Records, 1789-1813, microfilmed by the New York Historical Society, Reel 2, USMA Library, West Point, NY, hereinafter cited as "Court of Inquiry".

<sup>8</sup>"Continental Army Generals to General Washington," 17 May 1777, *Naval Documents*, 8: 987.

there "with the natural Strength of the Ground, must render the approach of an Enemy extremely difficult without considerable loss."<sup>9</sup>

The defenses that the generals had viewed showed promise against the threat from the river that they anticipated; properly manned, they had the potential to act as economy of force measures from which ships and brigades could maneuver. The key to these fortifications had originally centered upon Martelaer's Rock, the location picked by Christopher Tappen and James Clinton in June 1775. After surveying other sites, such as Popolopen Creek and Con Hook to its north, these two residents of the Hudson chose the difficult, "S"-shaped curve at West Point. They believed the narrowness of the channel and the effects of the tide (a three-foot change) and current made this the most appropriate spot. Their report included a description and a drawing of a post on Martelaer's Rock with a garrison of 300 men and another at West Point with 200 men. They had also recommended stretching booms across the Hudson between the two posts.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, the engineer hired by the New York Committee of Safety, Dutch-born surveyor, cartographer, and botanist Bernard Romans failed to follow the original conception to fortify both sides of the river. He

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<sup>9</sup>Washington to Putnam, 7 Aug. and 14 Sep. 1777, Fitzpatrick, Writings, 9: 35, 219.

<sup>10</sup>Report of James Clinton and Christopher Tappen to the New York Provincial Congress, 13 June 1775, Force, 4th ser., 2: 1296, map, 736.

also failed to develop the works that he did build effectively, expeditiously, and economically.

From 29 August 1775 to 9 February 1776 when the Continental and Provincial Congresses dismissed him, Romans had made only a start on his "Grand Bastion," dubbed Constitution Fort. He had completed an octagonal, wooden blockhouse with eight four-pounder cannons, barracks, a storehouse, and a curtain or wall capable of mounting a battery of fourteen cannons. The cannons emplaced in "Romans Battery" would be unable to take an enemy ship under fire until it was broadside, more than halfway through the "S"-curve. After Romans' dismissal, the commissioners for the construction completed a second curtain, to be called Marine Battery, with embrasures for eight cannons.<sup>11</sup> Influenced by the reports of investigating committees to the Provincial Congress, they further added two batteries of fascines, planks, and earth (Gravel Hill--eight cannons possible and Hill Cliff--capable of three cannons) on the eastern end of the island so that they could fire on British ships long before they reached the guns of the so-called "Grand Bastion."

The British, upon their actual arrival in October 1777, faced a Fort Constitution comprising Romans' Battery and

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<sup>11</sup>New York Provincial Congress, 18 Aug. 1775, Romans to New York Committee of Safety, 14 Sep. 1775, Commissioners to New York Provincial Congress, 11 November 1775, *ibid.*, 3: 535, 733-36, maps between 736-37, 1891-92; Romans, "Plan of a Part of Hudson's River Near & About the Fortifications Now Erecting in the Highlands," undated (probably late fall, 1775), Special Collections, USMA Library, West Point, NY.

Blockhouse, Marine Battery, and Hill Cliff and Gravel Hill batteries rated at forty-one artillery pieces, which had, as of 29 May 1777 no more than twenty-nine: nine 9-pounders, eighteen 6-pounders, and two 4-pounders. On 3 July, Putnam would commit the 9-pounders to the Continental frigate Congress, which had considerably fewer than its rated capacity of twenty-eight guns.<sup>12</sup> To man the works and the guns, Captain Gershom Mott reported that the total garrison on 6 October numbered thirty of his artillerymen and matrosses from Colonel John Lamb's 2d Continental Regiment of Artillery and "about 100 new levies of Militia" under Major Zachariah Dubois from Colonel Jonathan Hasbrouck's Regiment of New York Militia; for some reason Mott failed to remember some sixty Continentals from Colonel Lewis Dubois' 5th New York Regiment that the regimental return showed as being there.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Report of Francis Nicoll, Joseph Drake, and Thomas Palmer to the New York Provincial Congress, 14 December 1775, Papers, Continental Congress, 312-19; also in Force, 4th ser., 4: 420-22; Lord Stirling to Washington, 1 June 1776, *ibid.*, 6: 672-78; minutes, 25 Feb. 1775 and report of Captain William Smith to the New York Provincial Congress, 1 Mar. 1776, New York, Journal of the Provincial Congress, 223-24, 322, 330; Benjamin Franklin, The Papers of Benjamin Franklin, William B. Willcox, ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 22: 397-99; Romans, "Plan"; minutes, 13 Feb. 1776, Ford, 4: 133-34; "A Return of Ordinance Stores at Fort Constitution May 29th 1777," Public Papers, 1: 846; "Orders of Major General Israel Putnam," 4 July 1777, Naval Documents, 9: 215. (Captain Smith, the engineer of Major General Charles Lee, traced out Gravel Hill on a site identified but not fortified by Bernard Romans; Smith would also propose a trace for Fort Montgomery.)

<sup>13</sup>"Capt. Mott's Evidence, No. 16," "Court of Inquiry"; note to the "Return of the Men Garrisoned at Fort Montgomery, 20<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1777" and "Return of killed & wounded COL Dubois Reg.," indicated that "1 Capt 2 Lieuts 3 serjeants 2 Drums & fife and 59 Rank & file on Comm<sup>d</sup> at Fort Constitution of which number the Capt & 6 privates are Returned sick Absent," McDougall Papers; "Col. Hasbrouck's Reg't. of Militia--Services 1776 to 1778," George W. Pratt, An Account of the British Expedition Above the Highlands of the Hudson River, and of the Events Connected with the Burning of Kingston in 1777 (Albany: Munsell & Rowland, 1861), 68.

Romans' failure at Martelaer's Rock led colonial leaders, who still accepted parts of his general plan for Fort Constitution, to seek alternative sites for fortifications and obstacles. Congressional leaders heard from visiting committees that Romans' "Grand Bastion" was inadequate and that Popolopen Creek, more than four miles down-river, had off-setting advantages. Beginning in January 1776, colonial leaders diverted precious manpower and materials to two forts (Montgomery and Clinton) and a chain and boom. Workmen under the supervision of Captain Thomas Machin, also responsible for the chain at Anthony's Nose, sunk chevaux-de-frise between Pollepel's Island, across the river, to Plum Point on its west bank.<sup>14</sup> The forts on Popolopen Creek would be works in progress until the battle on 6 October.

Fort Montgomery was a sprawling work over-watching the chain that stretched over 1,700 feet from a cove below its Grand Battery to the base of Anthony's Nose. Until he could place booms in the river to protect the chain, George Clinton, its commander for the battle, had substituted a cable made by splicing together three smaller cables from the Continental frigate Montgomery.<sup>15</sup> The length of the fort itself from the tip of "Round Hill" redoubt on the northwest to the Grand Battery on the southeast was over 1,400 feet. Maps and

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<sup>14</sup>Thos. Machin to Committee of Safety, 21 Jan. 1777, New York, Journal of the Committee of Safety, 781.

<sup>15</sup>Brigadier George Clinton to Washington, 11 July 1777, Captain John Hodge to New York Council of Safety, 13 July 1777, Naval Documents, 9: 260, 281.

drawings of the fort emphasize the strength of the works facing the river.<sup>16</sup> The heart of these defenses against an attack from the river was the 100-foot long Grand Battery with walls eighteen feet thick; according to First Lieutenant William A. Patterson of the 15th Regiment, its five 32-pounders "Rakes the River Pretty Well For Three Miles."<sup>17</sup> The rest of the fort had one more 32-pounder, ten 12-pounders, fourteen 6-pounders, and two 3-pounders as of 20 June. The landward ramparts were "comparatively open with the works poorly situated and incomplete."<sup>18</sup>

On higher ground to protect its southern approach and connected to it by a bridge across Popolopen Creek was Fort Clinton. While the rear of the fort facing its sister was incomplete, this circular work was anchored by two star-redoubts, one of four points or bastions and the other of eight. Captain Andrew Moody of the 2d Artillery referred to the area between the redoubts as an "open field." Fifteen cannons, manned by forty artillerymen, protected the fort itself, including the eight-pointed redoubt: three 18-pounders, one 12-pounder, ten 6-pounders, and one 4-pounder.

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<sup>16</sup>"A Plan of Fort Montgomery & Fort Clinton, taken by his MAJESTY'S forces under the Command of Maj. Gen. Sir HENRY CLINTON. K. B. Survey'd by Major Holland, Surv. Gen<sup>l</sup>. &c" (London: J. F. Des Barres, 1 January 1779), print.

<sup>17</sup>"W<sup>m</sup> A. Patterson to Hon. &c," 22 April 1776 and "A Plan of the Intended Works at Fort Montgomery By W<sup>m</sup> A. Patterson 1<sup>st</sup> Lieut of the 15<sup>th</sup> Reg<sup>t</sup> --April 22 1776," Merle Gardner Sheffield Research Files, Special Collections, USMA Library, West Point, NY, from originals in the Massachusetts Historical Society.

<sup>18</sup>Carr and Koke, 29; it is unclear how many of these might have been at Fort Clinton, "A Return of Ordinance Stores at Fort Montgomery this twentyeth Day of June 1777," Public Papers, 2: 45.

The four-pointed redoubt to the southwest had three 6-pounders fired by nine men.<sup>19</sup> Colonel Lewis Dubois estimated that a garrison of two thousand men was needed to defend both forts properly; unfortunately, on the day of the battle fewer than 600 were present.<sup>20</sup>

General Putnam did have one other trump card to play: he was a joint force commander with a naval flotilla north of the chain to augment his mixed militia and Continental force by providing fire power and support. The Continental generals had recommended this step in their report in May, and the Continental Marine Committee had acted almost immediately by ordering the two frigates, the Montgomery and the Congress southward from Poughkeepsie.<sup>21</sup> By 13 July they would be joined by the New York sloop Camden and the Continental row galleys, Shark and Lady Washington. By scouring the region for armament, each of the ships had some cannons: the Montgomery with a crew of thirty-six, eight 12-pounders; the Congress, at least the nine 9-pounders from Fort Constitution; the Camden with a crew of eighteen, ten guns; the Shark with a crew of eighteen, four 9-pounders; and the Lady Washington with a crew of twenty, one 32-pounder and eight 3-pounders. Captain John Hodge of the Montgomery and Captain Thomas Grennell of the

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<sup>19</sup>Capt. Moody's of Col. Lambs Redgment Testimony," "Court of Inquiry."

<sup>20</sup>Genl. Putnam, N<sup>o</sup>. 25," *ibid.*; George Clinton to Washington, 9 Oct. 1777, "Naval Documents," 10: 94.

<sup>21</sup>Continental Marine Committee to the New York Council of Safety, 26 June 1777, Naval Documents, 9: 177.

Congress had scraped together crews from experienced sailors, soldiers, and even "Deserters, Boys, &ca."<sup>22</sup>

Undermanned and undergunned, the Hudson's navy suffered from its organization and the mission that senior leaders had assigned it. The Continental Marine Committee had established a workable, joint command relationship that linked its ships with the ground force: Grennell and Hodge were "to follow and obey such orders as they may receive from General Washington or the Commanding officer who may direct the operations in that quarter."<sup>23</sup> Because the mission of the ships was to protect the chain, they had "become a part of the work itself." This meant that George Clinton, as the overall commander of the two forts, exercised authority over them rather than General Putnam. Tied to the chain, Hodge would sacrifice the mobility and flexibility inherent in his naval force. As events would show, for joint forces to succeed, components must be able to perform up to their capabilities.

One other twist complicated the issue of authority: Hodge did not exercise command over the Congress, ordered by the Governor to sail on 5 October to Fort Constitution "lest she should meet with a Disaster." Despite Clinton's best efforts, disaster was in the cards for the ill-fated frigate: her acting commander, First Lieutenant Daniel Shaw, with the

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<sup>22</sup>George Clinton to Putnam, 15 June 1777, Captain John Hodge to the New York Council of Safety, 13 July 1777, *ibid.*, 9: 118, 281; "Capt Hodge's Evidence, N 7," "Court of Inquiry."

<sup>23</sup>Continental Marine Committee to the New York Council of Safety and to Captains Grennell and John Hodge, 26 June 1777, Naval Documents, 9: 176-77.



assistance of some sixteen artillerymen for Fort Constitution, would burn her on 7 October to prevent her from falling into the hands of the British. Although Hodge rated the galleys "manned and in a proper state of defence" and his own ship "in great forwardness," he would find that his inflexible mission and the actual state of his small force would limit the contribution he would be able to make to the outcome of the upcoming battle.<sup>24</sup>

As Washington had feared and predicted, General Clinton with the Hudson as his assigned theater of operation had developed a plan for a joint operation against the fortifications in the Highlands to assist Burgoyne's stalled expedition. Based upon a tailored naval and ground force, this plan would bring decisive combat power to bear through surprise, deception, and maneuver. From his intelligence, Sir Henry took the measure of the forts and Putnam's forces and, finding them to be in an "unguarded State," decided to launch a "Coup de Main" against them.<sup>25</sup> This operation would also use tactics, techniques, and procedures from previous wars and Revolutionary campaigns that had evolved into joint doctrine.

As Clinton and Hotham finalized their plan for the upcoming operation, the Commodore accepted his supporting role

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<sup>24</sup>Putnam to the New York Council of Safety, 5 June 1777, Phil. Livingston and Wm. Duer to Pierre Van Cortlandt, President of the New York Council of Safety, 31 May 1777, Hodge to Council of Safety, 13 Jul. 1777, and Cortlandt to the President of Congress, 11 June 1777, *ibid.*, 9: 24, 42, 90, 281.

<sup>25</sup>Lieutenant General Sir Henry Clinton to General Sir William Howe, 9 Oct. 1777, "Naval Documents," 10: 98.

in the convention of command that had evolved from the Seven Years' War. He initially objected to the nature of the operation because he seemed to consider it a raid that would not permanently retain any forts captured.<sup>26</sup> That objection did not deter him long from the acceptance and execution of Clinton's concept of the operation. Clinton asked his naval commander to meet him for dinner on 3 October so that "we will settle our plan of Operations."<sup>27</sup> Throughout the campaign, Hotham did everything that he could to insure the success of the joint operation even as he shouldered his responsibilities as commander of the fleet in New York, in the absence of the Viscount Howe.

Hotham organized his forces optimally so that he and his captains could put the soldiers ashore and support them with fires and logistics. Clinton wrote Sir William that "The Commodore has assisted me with his Advice, and every effort."<sup>28</sup> This was high praise indeed from one who had placed heavy responsibility on Sir Peter Parker for their failure at Charleston the year before. General Vaughan had equal praise for Hotham's subordinates: "I can't be too thankful to Sir James Wallace Captain Stanhope, and the rest of the Officers of the Navy for their great Attention and Assistance upon that

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 72n. Willcox notes that Hotham "consented to make the attack only reluctantly and at the last minute." In the original, Clinton's handwriting is difficult to read, "Memoranda," Clinton Papers, vol. 286, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI. Hotham mentions no disagreement in his letter to Admiral Howe in Hotham to Clinton, 1 Oct. 1777, *ibid.*

<sup>27</sup>Clinton to Commodore William Hotham, 2 P.M., 2 Oct. 1777, "Naval Documents," 10: 16.

<sup>28</sup>Clinton to General Howe, 9 Oct. 1777, *ibid.*, 10: 100.

Expedition."<sup>29</sup> While Hotham did not reciprocate the personal compliments in his dispatches to Admiral Howe, he did praise the successes that Clinton and the army achieved. He acknowledged the difficulties that the soldiers had faced ashore feeling that "it redounds the more to the credit of an Enterprize, which was formed and executed with equal Judgment, Valour and Success."<sup>30</sup> With unity of command assured, Clinton and Hotham set the affair in motion.

Clinton's opening gambit was to unveil a deception plan. His campaign in the Hudson Highlands thus actually started on 11 September 1777 with a letter from Sir Henry to Burgoyne and a diversionary raid into the area around Elizabeth Town, New Jersey. Clinton designed the raid "possibly to operate in favor of either Sir William Howe or General Burgoyne, or might at least draw off some part of the force that protected the Highlands, which were the destined object of my next move." Washington, in fact, took the bait and dispatched General McDougall with 1,500 men from Putnam's army to respond to the threat.<sup>31</sup> Clinton's letter promised a move with about two thousand men against the Highlands in some ten days if reinforcements arrived from Europe.<sup>32</sup> Burgoyne's response of 21 September, received on the 29th, agreeing that "an attack or even the menace of one upon Fort Montgomery would be of

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<sup>29</sup>Major General John Vaughan to Clinton, 26 Oct. 1777, *ibid.*, 10: 300.

<sup>30</sup>Hotham to Admiral Howe, 9 Oct. 1777, *ibid.*, 10: 97.

<sup>31</sup>Washington to Putnam, 10 and 14 Sep. 1777, *ibid.*, 201, 218.

<sup>32</sup>Clinton, American Rebellion, 70-71.

great use to him," and the arrival of 1,700 British and German reinforcements on the 24th spurred Clinton to action.<sup>33</sup> At dinner on 3 October he and Sir Henry finalized the plan for an operation that had already begun that morning.

From a garrison of almost ten thousand men Clinton organized a powerful strike force, which he then marshaled with the Commodore's ships for an initial landing at Tarrytown, New York, twenty-four miles above the Battery.<sup>34</sup> Hotham quickly tailored a naval force to support Clinton's expedition. Selecting three thousand troops for his expedition, Sir Henry would leave behind more than seven thousand to man the fortifications around New York City; the Commodore would leave a number of ships, including the frigates, H.M.S. Experiment, Apollo, and Galatea, to protect the port.<sup>35</sup>

For the first phase of the operation, Captain Cornthwaite Ommanney from the frigate, H.M.S. Tartar (28 guns), would lead the supporting squadron of H.M. Brig Diligent, the frigate, H.M.S. Mercury (20), and the armed galleys, Dependence and Spitfire, to a station near the objective of Tarrytown, dropping anchor at midnight, 3 October. From 4 October,

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 72.

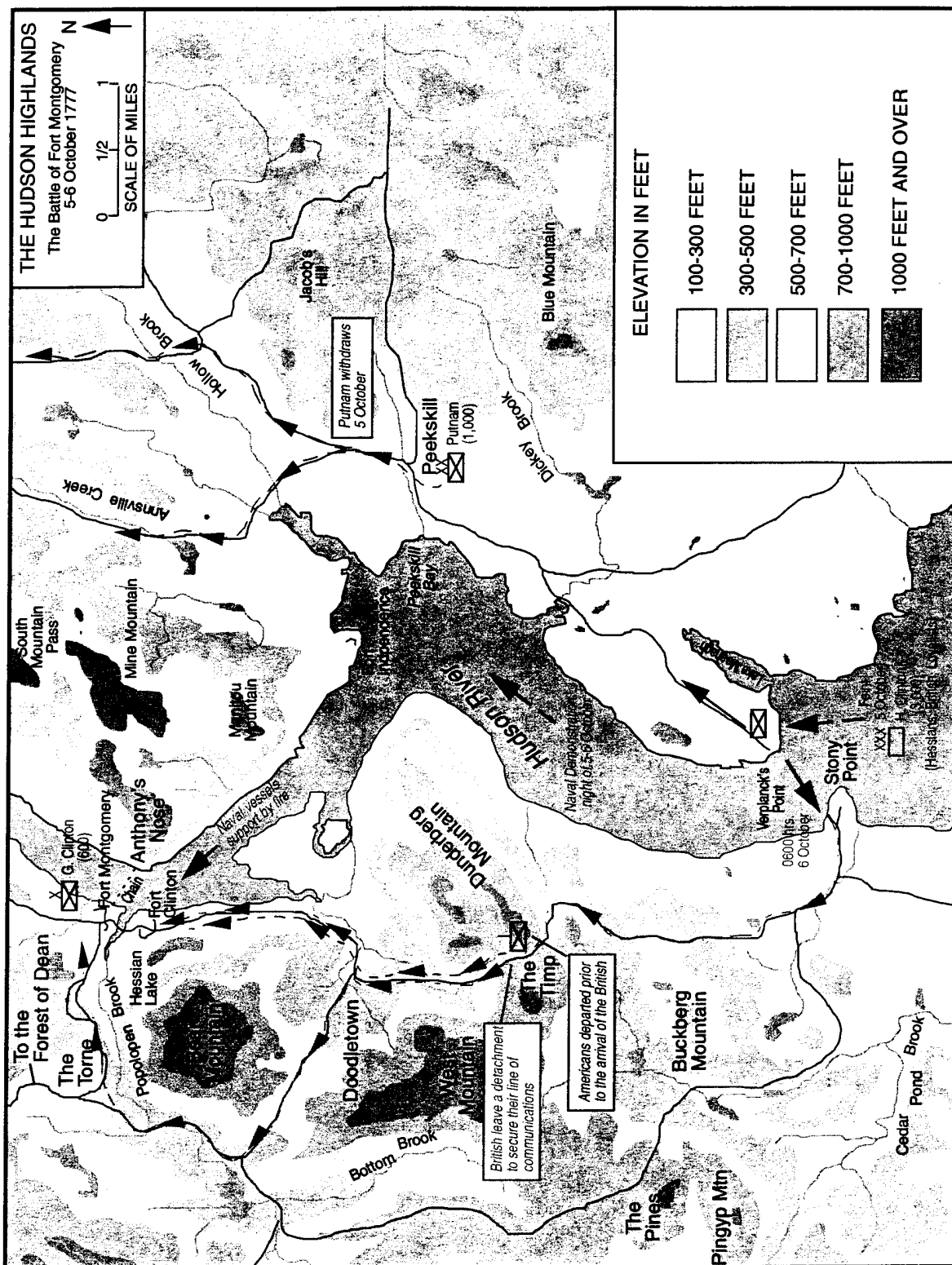
<sup>34</sup>Mileage based on Coast Pilot, 256-263.

<sup>35</sup>"State of Troops, British, and German under the Command of Lieutenant General Sir Henry Clinton, at New York and Posts depending, October 1, 1777," Public Papers, 2: opposite 516; Howe, Narrative, 23, 107; Clinton, American Rebellion, 63-64; Hotham picked the commanders of these ships for duty with the expedition, Commodore Hotham to Vice Admiral Viscount Howe, 9 Oct. 1777, "Naval Documents," 10: 96; "Disposition of His Majesty's Ships and Vessels employed in North America under the Command of Vice Admiral the Viscount Howe," 28 Aug. 1777, Naval Documents, 9: 838-843

because of his "Knowledge of the River," Captain Sir James Wallace of the Experiment would command this advanced or flying squadron, excluding the Tartar, from the armed vessel Friendship (22), reinforced by the armed galley, Crane and H.M. sloop tender Hotham. For the landing itself, Hotham detailed Captain Philemon Pownoll of the Apollo to command three divisions of flat-boats and bateaux, assisted by Captain Thomas Jordan of the Galatea (2d division), and Commander John Stanhope of the sloop, H.M.S Raven (3d division).

About 5 P.M. on 3 October this flotilla rendezvoused with and embarked Major General William Tryon's 1,100 troops from the 57th (Middlesex) and 63d (Manchester) regiments and Fanning's and Bayard's Provincial Corps (King's American Regiment and King's Orange Rangers respectively) at Spuyten Duyvil Creek. These troops landed from Pownoll's forty-two flat-boats at 5 A.M. on 4 October, with the loss of only one man, to occupy the heights overlooking Tarrytown. The Tartar "Made the Signal for the Troops to Land [and] fired 4 twenty four Pd<sup>er</sup>. Round Shot to Cover the Troops Land<sup>g</sup>." The British had brought overwhelming combat power to bear and were flawlessly following amphibious doctrine.

The operation continued to unfold like clockwork. The next two divisions joined the first at Tarrytown on 4 October. The second division under Sir Henry comprised over one thousand soldiers: Hessians in the Regiment de Trumbach,



Loyalists in Emmerich's Chasseurs, Colonel Beverly Robinson's Loyal American Regiment, and the New York Volunteers, and regulars, including 100 Highlanders from the 71st Foot (Fraser's Highlanders) and probably one troop of the 17th Regiment of Light Dragoons. The final division of some 800-900 men of the 7th (Royal Fusiliers), 26th (Cameronians), and 52d (Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry) regiments linked up later in the day in eleven transports and some small vessels, escorted by Hotham's flagship, the 4th rate Preston (50), that had sailed directly from New York.<sup>36</sup> With a line of communications secure to Tarrytown, the force prepared for the next hop to Verplanck's Point.

The second phase of Clinton's campaign focused on the landing sites near the King's Ferry that he and Hotham had chosen for the operations in the Highlands. Using surprise and deception and capitalizing on the mobility given him by Hotham's ships, Clinton executed a feint on the eastern bank of the Hudson at Verplanck's Point. He described this deception campaign colorfully: "every proper Jealousy having been given for every Object but the real one. . . ."<sup>37</sup> At Tarrytown, Clinton embarked his entire force in the transports

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid.; Commodore William Hotham to Vice Admiral Viscount Howe, 1 Oct. 1777, Clinton to Hotham, 2 Oct. 1777, Hotham to Admiral Howe, 9 Oct. 1777, Clinton to General Howe, 9 Oct. 1777, journals, 3 Oct. 1777, of Tartar, Diligent Apollo, Experiment, and Mercury and journals, 4 Oct. 1777, of Dependence, Experiment, and Preston, "Naval Documents," 10: 12, 16, 96-100; Stephen Kemble, "Kemble's Journal, 1777," Collections of the New-York Historical Society for the Year 1883 (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1884), 132-33; Pratt, 9.

<sup>37</sup>Clinton to General Howe, 9 Oct. 1777, "Naval Documents," 10: 98.

and flat-boats on the night of 4 October and, preceded by Wallace's flying squadron, sailed upriver to Verplanck's Point. At about noon on Sunday, 5 October, the troops in the flat-boats landed there unopposed, supported by the fires of the Diligent and the galleys. Wallace moved his vanguard "up to Peaks Kill [Peekskill] Neck to mask the only Communication they had across the River on this Side of the Highlands."

At dawn on 6 October, aided by fog, Clinton completed the maneuver by landing all but the 400 soldiers of Bayard's and Fanning's Corps left to guard the eastern shore at Verplanck's Point for the overland attack against Forts Montgomery and Clinton. The ships and transports displaced and anchored off Peekskill landing so that they would be in position to support the final assaults.<sup>38</sup> Had there been a book of joint procedures to follow, evaluators would have given Hotham credit for following it to the letter.

At the operational level of war, from the time that Clinton's troops had first gone ashore at Tarrytown until 26 October when the campaign ended, Israel Putnam reacted to the

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<sup>38</sup>Orderly Book, King's American Regiment, 18 December 1776-12 November 1777, typescript, USMA Library, West Point, NY; Hon. J.W. Fortescue, A History of the 17th Lancers (Duke of Cambridge's Own) (London: MacMillan and Co., 1895), 43-44; S. H. F. Johnston, The History of the Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) 26th and 90th, vol. 1, 1689-1910 (Aldershot, UK: Gale & Polden Limited, 1957), 148; W.S. Moorsom, ed., Historical Record of the Fifty-Second Regiment (Oxfordshire Light Infantry from the Year 1755 to the Year 1858) (London: Richard Bentley, 1860), 16; H.H. Woollright, History of the Fifty-Seventh (West Middlesex) Regiment of Foot, 1755-1881 (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1893), 64-65; Colonel H. C. Wylly, C. B., comp. History of the Manchester Regiment (Late the 63rd and 96th Foot) (London: Forster Groom & Co., 1923), 65; W. Wheeler, Historical Record of the Seventh or Royal Regiment of Fusiliers (Leeds: Private circulation, 1875), 72; journals, 5 Oct. 1777, Mercury, Dependence, and Diligent, Hotham to Admiral Howe, 9 Oct. 1777, and Clinton to General Howe, 9 Oct. 1777, "Naval Documents," 10: 42-43, 96, 98.



initiative of his opponent. His intelligence had been good. General Parsons at White Plains had warned him on 25 September that British reinforcements had arrived in New York and that "they were soon to move out of the City, supposed up the River, to attack the Forts in the Highlands." His immediate reaction had been to implore Governor Jonathan Trumbull of Connecticut and his commanders and Governor Clinton of New York to send militia to the Highlands. While the governors duly issued the orders, no militia responded from Connecticut and "few" from New York until after the forts had fallen. Washington's hope that Putnam would "draw in such a Force of Militia, as will effectually secure your post against any attempt from New York" proved to be only a hope.<sup>39</sup>

Heeding Washington's advice not to be caught too far to the south in the face of Clinton's naval assets, Putnam conceded Tarrytown and disposed his forces in the Highlands so that he could react to threats on either side of the river. To Washington he argued that he had lacked the force to react to the landing at Tarrytown, which was probably just as well, considering Sir Henry's plan. He focused his personal attention on and weighted his defenses around Peekskill and the heights northward, feeling "it impracticable to quit the Hightes (which we had then possession off [sic]) & attack the enemy." Throughout the opening phases of the operation,

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<sup>39</sup>Washington to Putnam, 11 Aug. 1777 and Washington to Putnam, 22 Aug. 1777, Fitzpatrick, Writings, 9: 56, 115; "Genl. Putnam, N<sup>o</sup> 25," "Court of Inquiry."

Putnam seemed to forget about the ships under his command. Even a raid using his admittedly few ships might have upset the timing of Clinton's operation. For whatever reasons, Putnam chose to act as a land rather than a joint force commander.

Clinton's feint and the actions of Hotham's ships on the morning of 6 October misled him when they seemed to threaten first Fort Independence and then Verplanck's Point with "an apparent design to land Troops. . . ." He and Parsons removed themselves from the decision point by reconnoitering toward Peekskill, realizing too late in the early morning fog that Clinton was loose on the west bank of the river. Putnam thus left General George Clinton to fend for himself at Popolopen since the forces that he sent to reinforce the beleaguered garrisons would not be able to get over the river in time.<sup>40</sup>

As Clinton and Hotham transitioned to the tactical level for the attack on the two forts on Popolopen Creek, they smoothly played their respective roles as ground and naval commanders and Clinton his role as joint force commander. Hotham skillfully landed the British, provincial, and Hessian forces at Stony Point relinquishing control to the general. Once ashore Sir Henry's plan of attack involved a two-prong advance over some twelve miles on Fort Montgomery from the west and Fort Clinton from the south. Clinton constituted

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<sup>40</sup> Hotham to Admiral Howe, 9 Oct. 1777, and Clinton to General Howe, 9 Oct. 1777, Putnam to Washington, 8 Oct. 1777, "Naval Documents," 10: 42-43, 72, 96, 98.

under Lieutenant Colonel Mungo Campbell an advance guard of 500 regulars from the 52d and 57th regiments and 400 provincials under Colonel Beverly Robinson from the Loyal Americans, New York Volunteers, and Emmerich's Chaussers; he charged Campbell to seize the pass through the Dunderberg, to march behind Bear Mountain, and then to attack Fort Montgomery. Clinton designated Major General John Vaughan to lead the main attack through the Dunderberg Pass and Doodletown against Fort Clinton with 1,200 soldiers from the grenadier and light infantry companies, the 26th and 63d regiments, one company of the 71st Regiment, a troop of the 17th Light Dragoons, and the Hessian Chasseurs. General Tryon commanded the rear guard of the 7th Royal Fusiliers and the Regiment de Trumbach; Clinton charged him to maintain the line of communications with the navy.

After taking the morning and afternoon to make the difficult approach march and to take a field piece that Governor George Clinton had sent out along Furnace Road, Campbell triggered the main offensive at about 5 P.M. with his final attack on Fort Montgomery. Although he perished as he entered the works leading his 52d Foot, the momentum of his assault carried Fort Montgomery in about forty-five minutes. After Clinton had waited "a favorable Moment" following the start of Campbell's fight, he ordered Vaughan to launch his main attack using the bayonet only across an open area of 400

yards filled with abbatis and covered by the fire of ten cannons. The march overland had prevented the use of artillery, so this attack was made with courage and discipline by the troops and what cannon fire Wallace could bring to bear from his galleys. In the face of a fierce cannonade from the American galleys, frigates, and sloop to the north of the chain and cable, the Dependence fired ninety-five twenty-four-pound shot and six four-pounders against these vessels and the forts.

As undermanned and as incomplete as its sister, Fort Clinton fell despite the gallantry of her defenders at about the same time as Robinson completed his work at Montgomery. By 8 P.M. Clinton knew that he owned the two forts with their supporting redoubts for a price that he reported of some 40 killed and 150 wounded. At 10 P.M. he and Hotham also had the pleasure of observing the blazing Montgomery, torched by its crew to prevent it from falling into British hands; the Shark and the Congress would suffer similar fates near Fort Constitution. The Camden would run aground and become a British prize. With the forts reduced, the ships dispersed, and Putnam and his forces withdrawing northward to protect the pass to Fishkill, over the next few days he would complete his control of the Highlands.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Hotham to Admiral Howe, 9 Oct. 1777, and Clinton to General Howe, 9 Oct. 1777, and journal of Dependence, 6 Oct. 1777, George Clinton to New York Council of Safety, 8 Oct. 1777, *ibid.*, 10: 42-43, 47, 70, 96, 98-99; "Capt. Hodge's Evidence," "Court of Inquiry."

With Putnam out of the immediate area, Clinton moved to take the remaining fortifications on the east side of the Hudson and at Martelaer's Rock using all of the elements of his joint force. First, the next morning Hotham ordered the chain and cable cut that blocked the river from Popolopen Creek to Anthony's Nose so that ships could make their way northward; work would continue on the chain until at least the 10th. They also sent a flag of truce with a "Summons" for the garrison of Fort Constitution at the latter to surrender. One of the militiamen fired upon the party, prompting Clinton to send on the 8th the Diligence, Spitfire, and the Crane with an expedition in twenty-one flat-boats to capture the, by then, abandoned fort and batteries. Hotham also sent Wallace and his flying squadron up river to check the chevaux-de-frise from Plum's Point to Pollepel's Island and to reconnoiter as far north as Poughkeepsie, burning stores and vessels and exchanging fire with American soldiers until 13 October.<sup>42</sup> Tryon played out the final act, the destruction of Continental Village beyond the abandoned Fort Independence, with Emmerich's Chasseurs, fifty Jägers, the Royal Fusiliers, the Regiment de Trumbach, and two three-pounder cannons.<sup>43</sup> With

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<sup>42</sup>Hotham to Admiral Howe, 9 Oct. 1777, Clinton to General Howe, 9 Oct. 1777, journals of the Preston, 8 Oct. 1777, Dependence, Diligent, and Mercury, 8-13 Oct. 1777, journal of the Tartar, "Naval Documents," 10: 68, 69, 97, 100, 109, 118, 128, 143.

<sup>43</sup>Clinton to Howe, 9 Oct. 1777, "Return of Cannon, Stores, Ammunition, &ca Taken & Destroyed upon the Expedition up the North River October 6th 1777," for the fruits of the expedition, *ibid.*, 100, 101; Wheeler, 72.

the Highlands now in hand, Clinton could turn his attention to the plight of Burgoyne fixed by General Gates at Saratoga.

After a short trip to Kingsbridge to make sure that the command there was in sure hands, Clinton ordered General Vaughan to take a corps of almost 2,000 men from the 7th, 26th, and 63d Regiments to link up with Burgoyne at Albany, if possible.<sup>44</sup> Hotham allocated Wallace's flying squadron, flat-boats under the command of Captain Stanhope, and thirteen transports for the troops to the expedition. Clinton ordered Fort Montgomery destroyed and fortified Fort Clinton, renamed Fort Vaughan, with a garrison of 800 men to act as his base in the Highlands. Hotham likewise secured the line of communications with New York by stationing the Mercury at Pollepel's Island, the Tartar near Fort Vaughan, the recently arrived frigate, H.M.S. Cerberus (28), at King's Ferry, and the Preston, "within Signals of either."<sup>45</sup> The elements of Clinton's and Hotham's forces were linked and operating with a single logic toward a common purpose.

On 16 October Vaughan would use Hotham's logic at Rondout Creek to mount another full-blown amphibious landing to destroy two batteries that had fired upon the flotilla and then to march on the nearby town of Esopus (Kingston), the seat of New York's government. Vaughan argued that since the

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<sup>44</sup>Clinton, American Rebellion, 79-80; Hotham to Admiral Howe, 21 Oct. 1777, "Naval Documents," 10: 233.

<sup>45</sup>Hotham to Howe, 15 Oct. 1777, journal of the Dependence, 18 Oct., 1777, *ibid.*, 10: 174.

town was "a Nursery for almost every Villain in the Country," and since Americans fired upon him from the houses, he found it necessary "to reduce the Place to Ashes . . . not leaving a House." After Wallace's ships provided gunfire support with canister and round shot for the landings, he used the occasion to burn "two Brigs, several large Sloops, and other Craft with all their Apparatus that was in Stores upon the Shore."<sup>46</sup>

With his rear relatively secure, Vaughan proceeded as far north as Livingston Manor, some forty-five miles south of Albany, burning stores, vessels, and houses as he went. That would prove to be the high water mark of the affair. Having received word that Burgoyne had surrendered his army and orders through Clinton from Howe that he needed his regiments in Pennsylvania, Vaughan, now facing some 6,500 troops on both sides of the river under Putnam and Brigadier General Samuel H. Parsons, on 22 October dropped back down the river. By 26 October he had his force back at Fort Vaughan. Pursuant to Howe's orders, Clinton ordered him to destroy Forts Vaughan and Independence and to return to New York. By 10 A.M. the Tartar joined the Mercury, and the last transports and slipped down the river.<sup>47</sup> But for the recriminations, Clinton's Hudson River campaign had come to a close; British forces would never

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<sup>46</sup>Vaughan to Clinton, 17 Oct. 1777, Wallace to Hotham, 17 Oct. 1777, journals of the Dependence and the Diligent, 16 Oct. 1777, *ibid.*, 10: 183-84, 192-93.

<sup>47</sup>Vaughan to Clinton, 26 Oct. 1777, journal of Tartar, 26 Oct. 1777, *ibid.*, 10: 299, 300.

again sail through or threaten the Hudson Highlands north of Stony Point.

As had been the case in the operations toward the end of the Seven Years' War, the British had proven in the Hudson River Campaign of October 1777 that they were masters of the joint, amphibious art. With landings in Elizabeth Town, Tarrytown and Verplanck's Point, Clinton had used operational surprise, deception, and maneuver to outsmart both George Washington and Israel Putnam. These operations and the ones at Stony Point and Rondout Creek had used sophisticated procedures to facilitate rapid landings. Providing lift, gunfire, and support, Hotham's flotilla had executed Clinton's daring plan to perfection. Sir James Wallace had reconnoitered and ranged the river with his flying squadron, upsetting the ability of the Americans to respond. Once ashore the mixed British forces had had sufficient combat power to overcome the forts and batteries that they had come to seize. Using joint doctrine, the British had executed littoral warfare at the operational and tactical levels to perfection. Despite these successes, all would ultimately be for nought. At the strategic level, both Clinton and Burgoyne, and even the Howes in the long run, ultimately had failed in 1777 and would lose the war itself by 1783.

For the Americans, only Horatio Gates had produced victory at Saratoga. Washington had resisted mightily, but



Philadelphia nonetheless had fallen to Howe. For George Clinton and Israel Putnam and their soldiers and sailors, the Hudson River Campaign had been an unmitigated disaster. At the operational level, Putnam had played to Clinton's every move and failed to exploit the capabilities of the joint force that he commanded. Tactically, bravery had proven inadequate to carry the day at Forts Montgomery and Clinton. Lacking the proper resources, the Americans had succumbed to a superior British plan and overwhelming combat power. The cooperation between Hodge's ships and Clinton's forces, while commendable, was rudimentary, a particularly dangerous situation in such an inferior force. For the Americans joint operations never really had a chance to flower. George Clinton provided the epitaph for the affair: "I impute all however to a bad Head, no part to a wicked Heart."<sup>48</sup> In the summer of 1781, Sir Henry Clinton would have the "bad Head," and George Washington, with adequate, joint resources, would take advantage of Clinton's condition to threaten New York City and then to capture Cornwallis' army at Yorktown. From the perspective of 1783, the victories of 1777 would prove to be hollow.

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<sup>48</sup>Copy of AL, George Clinton to General Alexander McDougall, 13 Nov. 1777, Special Collections, USMA Library, West Point, NY.

## EPILOGUE

NEW YORK CITY, 1781:

"THE CENTER AND FOCUS OF ALL THE BRITISH FORCES"

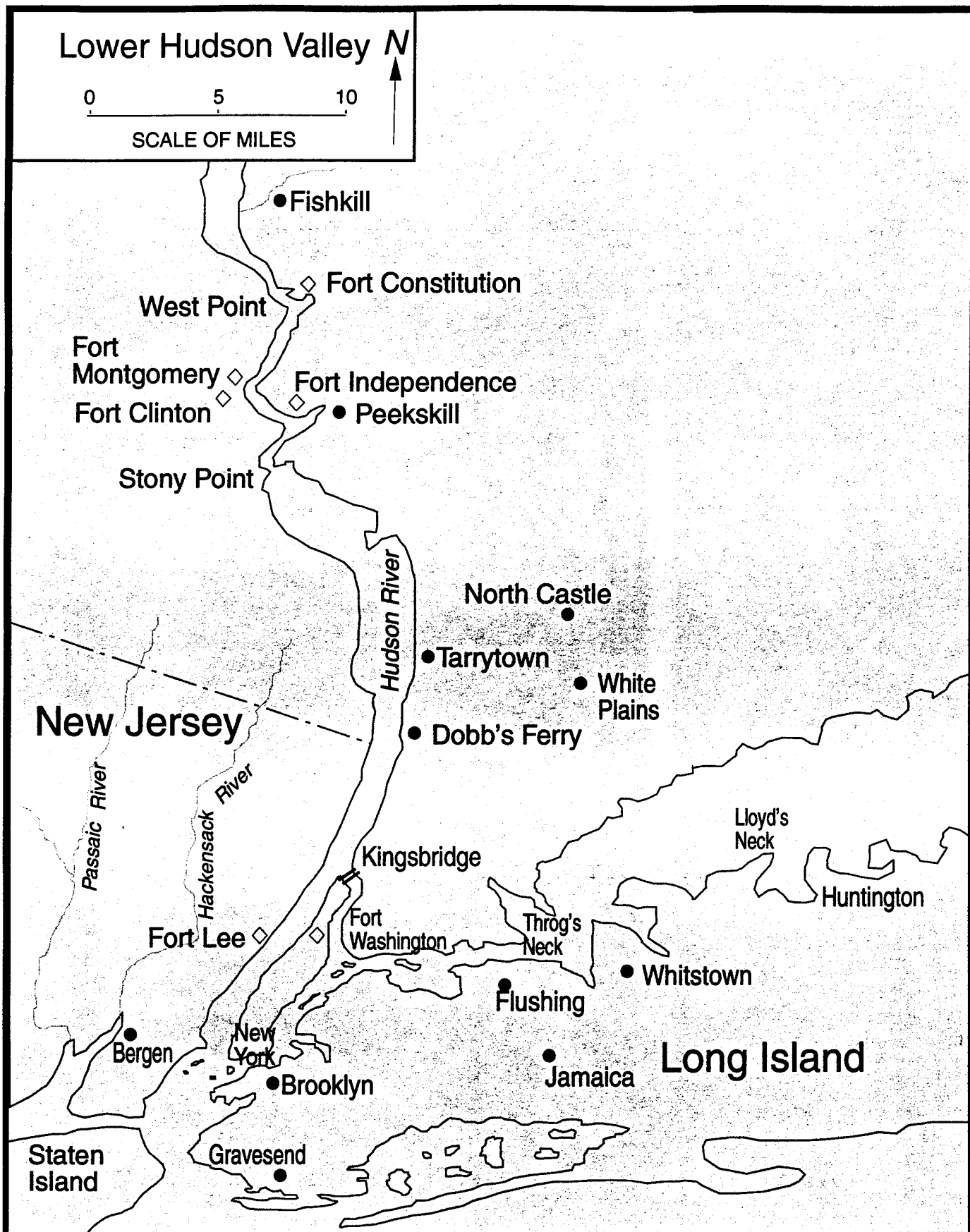
In the summer of 1781 General George Washington's and General Sir Henry Clinton's ideas about a war of posts and joint operations converged on New York City. Unlike 1777, the campaign that Washington planned for 1781 would pit the one against the other. Washington had wanted to retake the city since losing it in the fall of 1776. Never venturing far from it throughout the war, he would see an opportunity to capture it with French help in 1781 in a joint, combined operation. Clinton had made it the major base for the British Army in North America, the place to which he had returned after launching the British Southern strategy in South Carolina by capturing Charleston in 1780. Except for a half-hearted attempt to rescue General Charles, Lord Cornwallis in October 1781, he and the British Army would remain there until he relinquished command to Sir Guy Carleton in 1782 and the army withdrew in 1783. Washington would turn the tables on the master of joint operations by planning and executing his own joint, combined operation that posed so credible a threat to New York that Clinton thought he had to take it seriously.

As France and the "Congress of the United States" worked through the formative years of their alliance, they developed an ideal command relationship by 1781 for the combined and joint operations that would ensue. King Louis XVI had decreed that Washington would be the supreme commander: "'That the General to whom His Majesty entrusts the command of his troops should always and in all cases be under the command of General Washington.'" While the subordination of the admiral of the fleet was not as clear cut, the King had directed that "It shall be the duty of the Naval Commander to second by every means in his power all the operations to which his aid shall be asked." As the Yorktown Campaign would demonstrate, Admiral Jacques-Melchior Saint Laurent, Count, de Barras would parry Washington's guidance taking advantage of the loophole of "'circumstances'" and "'local possibilities'" that the King had afforded him.<sup>49</sup> In collusion with Rochambeau, de Grasse would choose the Chesapeake rather than the more difficult objective of New York, despite Washington's wishes.<sup>50</sup> Washington grasped the possibilities and bent to his Allies' idea. De Barras with the siege train, de Grasse, and Rochambeau under Washington's command converged on Cornwallis.

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<sup>49</sup>Instructions of King Louis XVI, 1 Mar. 1780 quoted in Stephen Bonsal, When the French Were Here: A Narrative of the Sojourn of the French Forces in America, and Their Contribution to the Yorktown Campaign (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1945), 12, 15-16.

<sup>50</sup>The Journal of the Vicomte de Rochambeau, chap. in Rochambeau, Father and Son, trans. Lawrence Lee (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1936), 218.



The Allies had worked out a formula for command that followed British practice.

Washington and Rochambeau massed enough combat power around New York to convince Clinton that they were serious about attacking him there. Sir Henry's forces by his own count were close to eleven thousand, manning an extensive system of forts and redoubts, fronting the Hudson with (from south to north) Fort Knyphausen, Fort Tryon, and Fort Cock Hill; protecting Kingsbridge's redoubt with Prince Charles' Redoubt; and overwatching Harlem Creek from Fort George.<sup>51</sup> Washington reported in his return for July 1781 that he had 6,425 effective soldiers near Dobbs' Ferry out of a force of 10,265; he also reported that Rochambeau's army numbered 4,400.<sup>52</sup> Clinton had himself estimated the threat to be 11,000 and in a personal reconnaissance to Kingsbridge on 25 July reported seeing "the enemy in great force occupying the same ground as before."

With only six British ships of the line in harbor, the wild card of course was de Grasse and his fleet. As late as 16 August, he wrote: "La Grasse expected hourly."<sup>53</sup> Anticipating the arrival of a French reinforcing convoy, Rear Admiral Thomas Graves had sailed on 21 July "into Boston Bay,

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<sup>51</sup>General Sir Henry Clinton to Lieut.-General Earl Cornwallis, 11 July 1781, Davies, Transcripts, 20: 185; Fitzpatrick, Diaries, 2: 237-39, 243.

<sup>52</sup>"July 1781," Lesser, 206; Lee Kennett, The French Forces in America, 1780-1783 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977), 112, 122; Washington to Comte de Grasse, 21 July 1781, Fitzpatrick, Writings, 22: 401.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 402; Sir Henry Clinton, "My Plan," 16 Aug. 1777, Clinton Papers, reel 37.

to be in the way of intercepting the Supplies from France to North America,"<sup>54</sup> leaving Clinton vulnerable to attack from the sea. This potential combination of joint forces continued to impress Sir Henry since he thought that Washington "seemed to threaten Staten Island until the 29th [of August] when he suddenly moved towards the Delaware. At first I judged this to be a feint."<sup>55</sup> With deception, Washington had played Clinton in 1781 as Clinton had played Putnam in 1777.

Washington had kept the land, riverine, and French naval forces at his disposal active as he explored his alternatives for an attack or siege. His actions helped to reinforce his deception plan once he turned toward Virginia. First, he had planned a "coup de main" for the night of 2 July with a force of some 800 troops under the command of Major General Benjamin Lincoln. Using boats, this strike force was to seize Fort George as its "primary object" and Forts Knyphausen and Tryon as well. If Lincoln's reconnaissance proved this raid to be infeasible, he was to land north of Spuyten Duyvil Creek to support an attack by the Duke de Lauzun's corps upon Delancey's Corps at Morrisania near the Harlem Ferry to the east of Manhattan Island. Circumstances forced Lincoln to land near Phillips's House on the morning of 3 July in an abortive

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<sup>54</sup>Graves to Philip Stephens, 20 Aug. 1781, French Ensor Chadwick, ed., The Graves Papers and Other Documents (New York: Naval Historical Society, 1926; reprint, New York: Arno Press, Inc., 1968), 32.

<sup>55</sup>Clinton to Lord George Germain, 7 Sep. 1781, Davies, 20: 222.

attempt to aid de Lauzun who arrived too late from his approach march from Connecticut to contribute to the action.<sup>56</sup>

Washington would continue to focus Clinton's attention on New York with a raid against the fort at Lloyd's Neck near Huntington Bay, Long Island, and an active program of reconnaissance. The French launched the unsuccessful raid to Lloyd's Neck from Newport, Rhode Island, on 10 July with a force of 250 soldiers aboard four frigates under the command of the Baron d'Angely. While the force failed to take the fort, it did seem to signal increased Allied activity around New York.<sup>57</sup> On 21-22 July, covered by the whole army deployed on the surrounding heights, Washington and Rochambeau conducted an armed reconnaissance along the British northern works.<sup>58</sup> All of this would lead Clinton to the conclusion that "as these Posts are undoubtedly their object, I may have cause to be alarmed for their Safety in consequence of the enemies Naval Superiority. . . ."<sup>59</sup>

Clinton would figure out too late that the real danger lay elsewhere. Even as he was surrounded by the Allied armies, in a flight of fancy he would contemplate an expedition with three thousand men against de Barras's forces

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<sup>56</sup>Washington to Rochambeau, 30 June 1781, Instructions to Major General Benjamin Lincoln, 1 July 1781, and Washington to the President of Congress, 6 July 1781, Fitzpatrick, Writings, 22: 293-301, 330.

<sup>57</sup>Fitzpatrick, Diaries, 2: 5n; Baron Ludwig von Closen, The Revolutionary Journal of Baron Ludwig von Closen 1780-1783, trans. and ed. Evelyn M. Acomb (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1958), 93-94.

<sup>58</sup>Fitzpatrick, Diaries, 2: 241-45; Closen, 97-99.

<sup>59</sup>Clinton to Lord George Germain, 26 Jul. 1781, Clinton Papers.

in Newport or an "attempt" on Philadelphia.<sup>60</sup> Based on his own personal reconnaissance, the arrival in New York of over 2,500 German reinforcements, and de Grasse's arrival in the Chesapeake, Washington decided to leave Clinton behind in New York and to cooperate "with the force from the West Indies against the Troops in that State [Virginia]." He set the first column in motion 19 July for its rendezvous with destiny.<sup>61</sup>

As Clinton had done to Israel Putnam in 1777, Washington with the Comte de Rochambeau seized the initiative in July 1781 and, although he did not gain his personal objective, he fixed Clinton on Manhattan long enough to seal Burgoyne's fate at Yorktown. Hoping for the assistance of Count de Grasse's fleet, Washington conceived and executed a joint and allied operation centered on New York that, by posing a credible threat to New York, opened that final, decisive campaign. Clinton, the master of joint operations, on the other hand, hesitated with no fleet readily at hand when it was needed and failed to extract or reinforce Cornwallis in time to save him. Washington had exacted his revenge for the humiliations of 1777.

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<sup>60</sup>Clinton, "My Plan."

<sup>61</sup>"State of the German Troops as Disembarked at New York 14 Aug. 1781," Clinton Papers; Fitzpatrick, Diaries, 2: 254-55.



## CONCLUSIONS

Despite overwhelming resources and sophisticated joint doctrine, the British military establishment failed to defeat the citizens of its rebellious colonies in the American Revolution. Time and time again, British generals and admirals produced operational and tactical victories; unfortunately for them, no strategic victory resulted from these successes. By chance or choice, first General Sir William Howe and then General Sir Henry Clinton settled on a military strategy of a defensive war of posts that they executed using joint operations. Sir William had missed opportunities at Long Island, Manhattan, and Brandywine to destroy General George Washington's Continental Army. Sir Henry never maneuvered Washington into comparable situations and seemed content to capture important seaports with joint expeditions and maintain a base in New York City. In line with the thinking of his predecessors and recognizing the strengths of this location, he thus made "the line of the Hudson" the "seat of the war" to which he always returned.

After running potentially fatal risks at New York and around Philadelphia, Washington also settled into a war of posts to guarantee the survival of his army and to hasten the

loss of will by his adversaries. Even before he had become the commander in chief of the American army, he had understood the benefits of the Hudson. He supported the construction of fortifications in the Hudson Highlands and used them as a pivot for the movement of his army in subsequent campaigns. He would never venture far from a region that he had concluded was the "Key to the Northern Country" and by extension the "key of America." He would do all that he could to convince his French allies of its value as well. While they would second the primacy of New York as an objective, even with their considerable joint forces they sensibly resisted his plans to attack the well-defended center of British military power in New York.

Commanders of both armies had assessed the Hudson and arrived at similar conclusions about its worth. They understood that it was the nexus of population, industry, agriculture, commerce, communications, and logistics. As strategists, they recognized that the Hudson was at once an avenue and a barrier, particularly in the Highlands. It was an invasion route to and from Canada at the one end and New York City on the other. Command of the Hudson influenced the economy and affected the movement of manpower and supplies. For the British, "the line of the Hudson" also offered a thrust line that could split the New England states from their partners in rebellion to the south. Both sides consequently

invested resources and manpower into the protection of the portion of the Hudson that they controlled. They also mounted operations, such as Burgoyne's invasion of 1777 and Washington's move against the northern reaches of Manhattan in 1781, to try to expand their influence.

In the wars of the mid-eighteenth century the British and the French developed sophisticated, joint doctrine that allowed them to conduct amphibious operations against one another. The British, in particular, refined practices in their wars against the Spanish and the French in the Seven Years' War to such a degree that, in the American Revolution, they were able to succeed in every major joint operation, except Charleston in 1776, until Count de Grasse's fleet negated their capability in the Yorktown Campaign of 1781. This doctrine would fit well into a war of posts, allowing the British army and navy to capture the major seaports of the eastern coast.

By the American Revolution the British had absorbed into their working doctrine, tactics, techniques, and procedures for joint operations in general and amphibious landings in particular. The starting point for this process for the officers of the Army and the Royal Navy was an awareness that conjunct operations filled their heritage. Additionally, by personal experience or the experiences of their commanders, peers, or subordinates, they learned what was expected at each

level of war to prosecute their campaigns and tactical landings. Finally, printers offered books that included instructions and ideas from experienced practitioners upon which the inexperienced could draw to expand their knowledge.

For the British, successful joint operations were the products of a heritage of cooperation between the army and the navy. Jointness started at the top as political leaders and senior commanders began planning at the strategic levels by choosing appropriate objectives to fulfill the political purposes of the war. Since these objectives were generally beyond the shores of England, commanders had to conduct joint operations to accomplish the tasks. Senior leaders apportioned joint forces so that expeditionary commanders had the relative combat power to undertake the military tasks at the operational and tactical levels. The personalities and experiences of the respective commanders had a decisive bearing on their outcome; enthusiastic cooperation between naval and land commanders with constant consultation proved to be of paramount importance to bridge the gap between the capabilities of their respective services. At the operational and tactical levels of war, intelligence, deception, surprise, communications, doctrine, and procedures made the difference between success and failure as they would in any military operation involving only a single service. In joint and combined operations, however, these components became even

more significant because they required at least two services and, in the American case, two nations, to merge their respective capabilities into a single force under one overall commander against a series of common objectives.

While Americans shared with their countrymen a heritage of joint warfare and had even participated in some of the earlier operations, they had lacked the capability to counter the British maritime threat until Admiral d'Estaing arrived with his fleet in 1778 and had resorted principally to commerce-raiding at sea and land campaigns. As a consequence, American joint operations had been few and generally unsuccessful. To make up for the lack of personal experience, the Americans had had to rely upon oral tradition for the insights of their cooperative expeditions with the British and the books available to them on a variety of military subjects from drill to littoral war. Once France entered the War for Independence, its commanders would lend their new allies guidance and support based upon their own extensive experience, in many cases gained against the British. This assistance would bear fruit in 1781 when General Rochambeau, Admiral de Grasse, and Washington would collaborate to threaten New York City and then to produce a joint and combined victory at Yorktown that would have a resounding influence on the outcome of the war.

As had been the case in the operations toward the end of the Seven Years' War, the British had proven in the Hudson River Campaign of October 1777 that they were masters of the joint, amphibious art. With landings in Elizabeth Town, Tarrytown, and Verplanck's Point, Clinton had used operational surprise, deception, and maneuver to outsmart both Washington and General Israel Putnam. These operations and the ones at Stony Point and Rondout Creek had used sophisticated procedures to facilitate rapid landings. Providing lift, gunfire, and support, Hotham's flotilla had executed Clinton's daring plan to perfection. Sir James Wallace had reconnoitered and ranged the river with his flying squadron, upsetting the ability of the Americans to respond. Once ashore the mixed British forces had had sufficient combat power to overcome the forts and batteries that they had come to seize. Using joint doctrine, the British had executed littoral warfare at the operational and tactical levels to perfection.

For Generals George Clinton and Putnam and their soldiers and sailors, the Hudson River Campaign had been an unmitigated disaster. At the operational level, forgetting the capabilities of the joint forces over which Putnam exercised command, he had played to Clinton's every move. Tactically, bravery had proven inadequate to carry the day at Forts Montgomery and Clinton. Lacking the proper resources, the

Americans had succumbed to a superior British plan and overwhelming combat power. The cooperation between Hodge's ships and Clinton's forces, while commendable, was rudimentary, a particularly dangerous situation in such an inferior force. For the Americans joint operations in 1777 never really had had a chance to flower.

Washington and Rochambeau would show the new side of their combined capability by putting together the threat of a joint operation against New York City in July 1781 that had dramatic repercussions. With Rochambeau operating as a subordinate to Washington by order of his King, both agreed that the city would be their objective for their summer campaign. On 6 July they massed over ten thousand troops near the British fortifications of Kingsbridge and northern Manhattan. They made their combat power even more credible since the uncertain destination of Count de Grasse meant that Clinton had to take their apparent intentions of a siege seriously. Washington used deception, surprise, and the mobility provided by small boats and French frigates to conduct raids near Manhattan and on Long Island.

Both commanders personally reconnoitered the British lines to gain additional intelligence, supported by a full line of battle. These and the news that de Grasse had sailed to Chesapeake Bay caused the American commander in chief to reconsider his plans and agree with his French counterpart to

move against Cornwallis. Clinton would hesitate too long to provide relief to his difficult subordinate, vulnerable after de Grasse had defeated Admiral Thomas Graves in the Battle of the Virginia Capes. New York had proven to be the prelude to the decisive, Allied victory in Virginia. Washington had exceeded his own orders to the Marquis de Lafayette: with the help of Rochambeau and de Grasse, he had made the "best uses" of his joint and combined forces.

For the joint force commander and staff officer of the present and future, insights leap out from the experiences of their predecessors of the eighteenth century. Component commanders must know more than the business of their individual services; they must look beyond their parochial interests to see the needs of the joint expedition. Sir James Wallace was always literally ahead of General Vaughan as he facilitated the operations in the Hudson.

Although commanders represent different services with doctrine and standard operating procedures, they must be of one mind as they set objectives, tailor forces, pick landing sites, and sustain forces once they are engaged. Personalities must mesh, and, after honest differences are addressed, harmony must prevail. With initiative, planning, and aggressive execution, based upon the synergism of the capabilities of individual service components, commanders can use surprise, deception, and mobility to gain achieve victory.



The joint tactics, techniques, and procedures gained through experience and doctrine take over as the joint task force swings into action. Oneness as jointness prevails.

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